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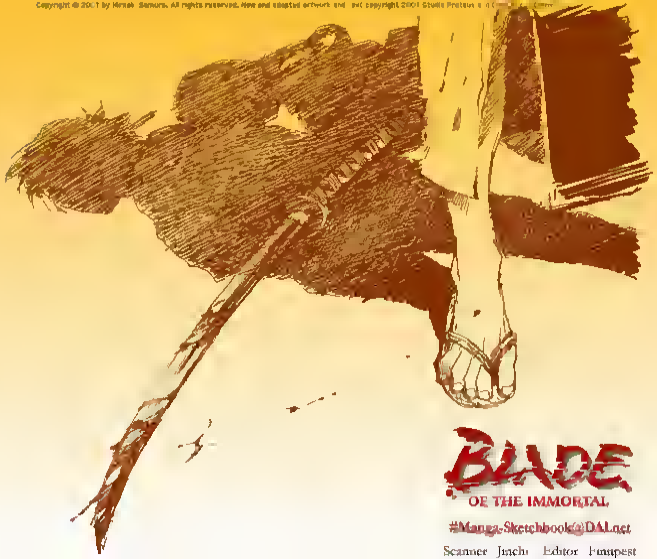

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

The Gathering

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

The Gathering

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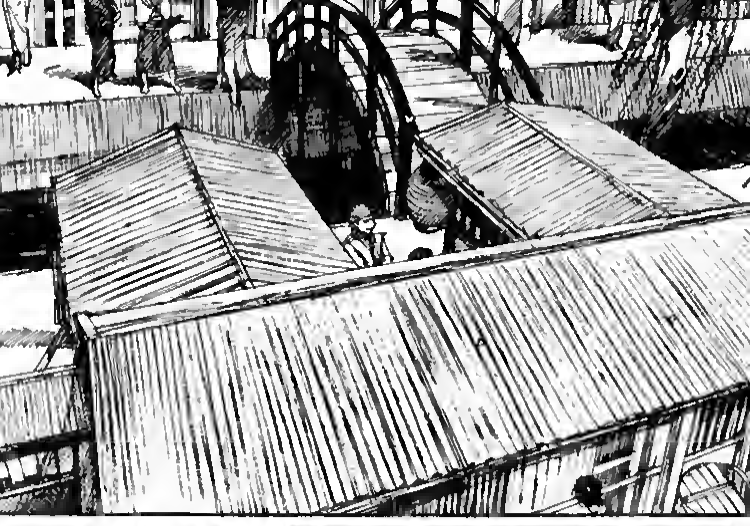
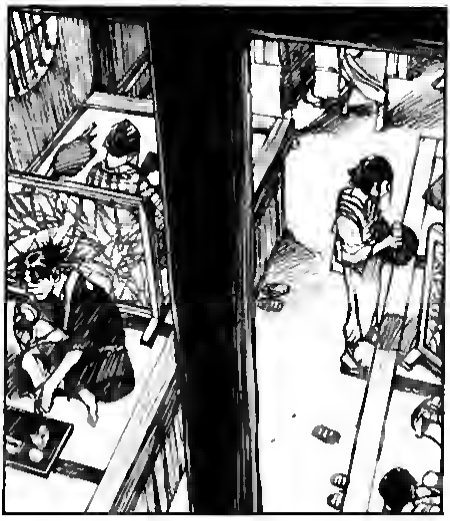
lettering and retouch
Tomoko Saito

The Gathering

DARK HORSE COMICS®

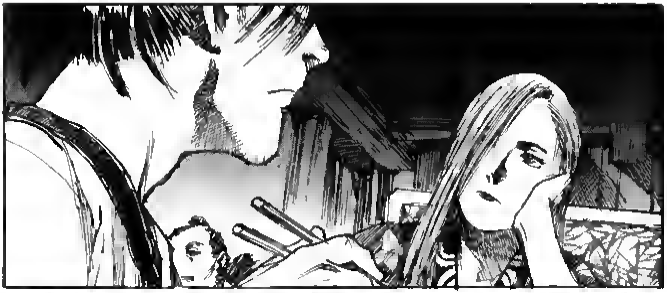
MONGREL

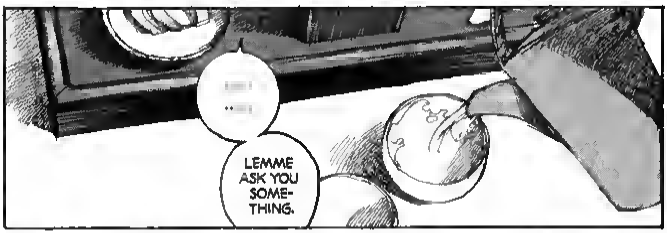




OOMPH...!
?
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
HUH?!
OH, RIGHT... I FORGOT.
WHAT'S UP?
HEY... THAT'S WEIRD. NO "LITTLE MISSY" BY YOUR SIDE.
A PITCHER OF SAKE... COLD.
YES, MA'AM!

TA-DAA!♪ LITTLE MISS HYAKURIN!
.....
.....
OKAY, WHADDA YA WANT?
NICE TALK!
JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I'D POUR YOU ONE.
IT'S SHIRA.
HE HASN'T COME BACK.
WELL? HE WAS WORKING WITH YOU GUYS, REMEMBER?
WHERE DID YOU PART WAYS?





* THE MAIN ROADS OUT OF EDO TOWARD KAGA.

"WE DIDN'T EXPECT THAT"...? THAT'S ALL YOU CAN SAY, YOU DIPSHIT?!
THANKS TO THAT LOUSY IDIOT SPY OF YOURS, MY COMPANION'S LAID OUT IN BED RIGHT NOW!
"COMPANION"... YOU MEAN POOR RIN?
WHAT HAPPENED TO HER? A RUN-IN WITH THE ITTŌ-RYŪ?
NO.
IT WAS THAT FRIGGIN' SHIRA.
SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED, HMM? OH, DEAR.
SOUNDS LIKE THINGS GOT KIND OF... MESSY.
...IF YOU HAD TO WOUND THAT SCUMBAG, YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE JUST GONE AHEAD AND FINISHED THE JOB.
BUT, YOU KNOW..
....!
WELL, IN ANY CASE, NOW I KNOW BETTER.
I'M ENDING THIS COLLABORATION OF OURS RIGHT NOW.

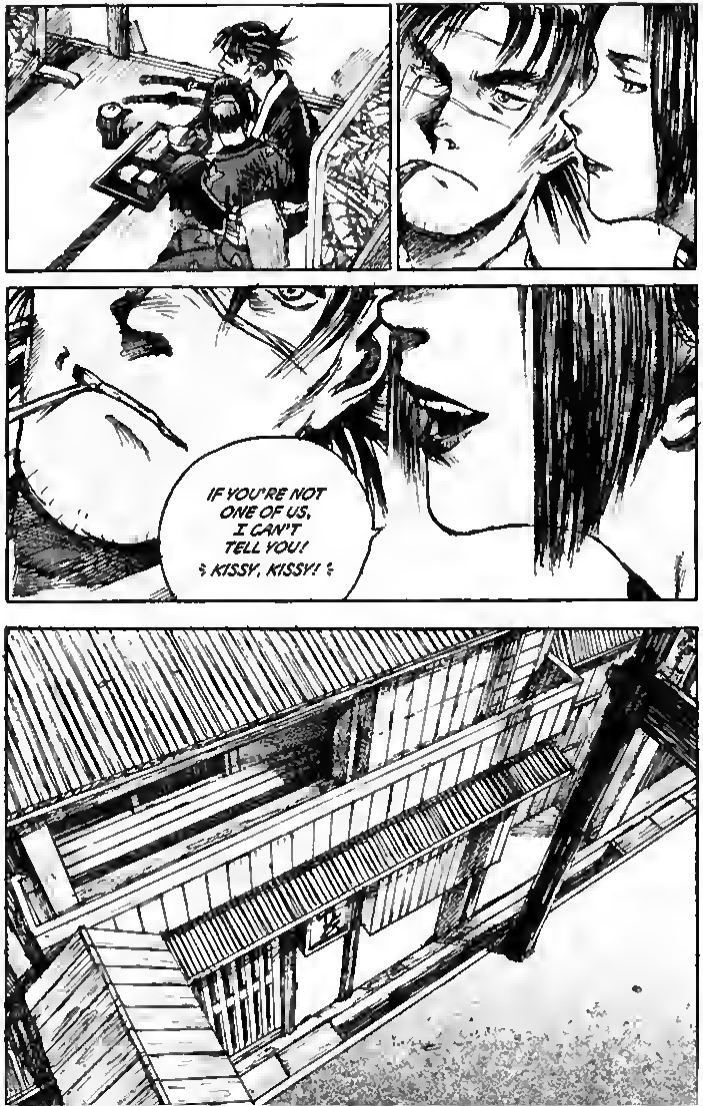
I ALREADY "CUT" OUR TIES WITH SHIRA, BUT...
...I CAN'T TRUST ANYONE WHO'D WANT TO KEEP A PET MONSTER LIKE THAT IN THEIR GANG.
AND ANYWAY, THE KID...
SHE'S SURE AS HELL NOT GONNA BE STRAIGHT WITH YOU GUYS ANYMORE.
.....
.....
HMPH.
I'M NOT PARTICULARLY HAPPY AT BEING LUMPED TOGETHER WITH THAT GUY...
BUT I SUPPOSE YOU CAN'T HELP IT.

BY THE WAY...
...I WILL TELL YOU ONE THING.
GIICHI FOUND OUT SOME-THING--
--WHERE ANOTSU WILL BE STAYING IN KAGA.
IN THE MUGAI-RYÛ...
WE'RE IN THE SAME BOAT YOU ARE, SEE?
...IT'S ONE OF OUR OFFICIAL REGULATIONS THAT WE CAN'T CHASE OUR ENEMIES THROUGH THE CHECK-POINTS.
KUKUKU KUKUKU! BUT, YOU KNOW... TO TELL THE TRUTH...
...EVEN THOUGH WE KNOW THAT NOW, IT'S TOTALLY MEANING-LESS.

SO WE JUST GOT WORD FROM THE TOP-- WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO DO NEXT IS FILE A COMPLETE REPORT TO OUR BOSSES ABOUT THIS WHOLE FIASCO...
AND THEN GO BACK TO HUNTING DOWN SMALL FRY FOR ONE AND A HALF RYŌ A HEAD. PRETTY PATHETIC, HUH?
.....
.....
I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK YOU.
THESE BOSSES OF YOURS...
WHO THE HELL ARE THEY?
THEY DON'T WANT PUBLICITY... BUT IT DOESN'T QUITE FEEL LIKE A VENDETTA.
AND GOING UP AGAINST THE ITTŌ-RYŪ, THAT'S MORE THAN JUST A LARK.

HMM... LIVING EXPENSES, PLUS ONE AND A HALF RYŌ PER STIFF...
I DUNNO. PRETTY ENVIABLE TERMS, IF YOU ASK ME. HEH, HEH...
I HEARD YOU PROMISED RIN THAT "IF THIS PLAN SUCCEEDS, I'LL TELL YOU WHO WE REALLY ARE."
SOME-THING LIKE THAT, ANYWAY.
OF COURSE, IT DIDN'T TURN OUT THAT WAY.
WE DIDN'T EVEN SEE THE GUY.

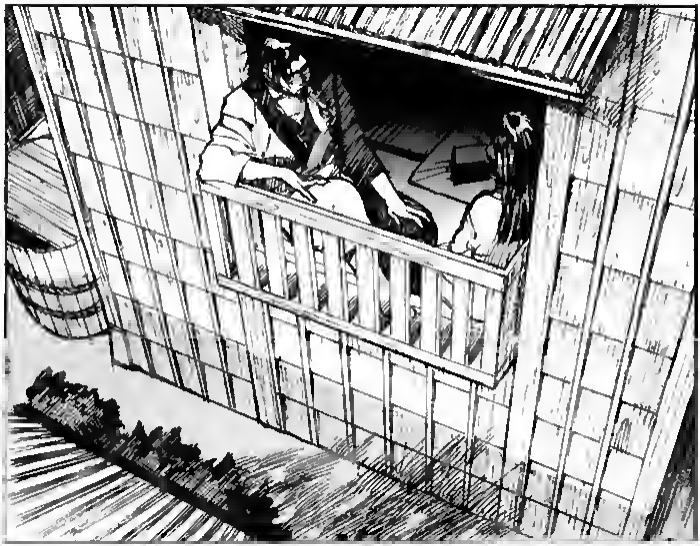
SO I'LL LET IT GO...
..IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SAY.
REALLY?
IN THAT CASE... I WON'T.
WE'RE DONE WORKING TOGETHER ANYWAY, SO IT'S NO BIG DEAL. ON THE OTHER HAND...
I DO EXPECT YOU TO TELL US WHERE ANOTSU'S GONE.
AND IF I DO, WHAT THEN...?
YOU CAN'T GO AFTER HIM.
THAT'S MY BUSINESS. TELL ME.
WELL, THEN, LET ME WHISPER IT IN YOUR EAR, SUGAR.


IF YOU'RE NOT ONE OF US, I CAN'T TELL YOU!
♪ KISSY, KISSY! ♪

OW OW OW OWW~ OOH!
GOD.. EVERY BONE IN MY BODY ACHES...

HEY...?! OUT OF BED ALREADY?
WELL, I WAS SO HUNGRY I GOT UP.
EH HEH HEH
AH, WELL...
HUH!

YOU HAD ME KINDA WORRIED, KID.
YOU COLLAPSED IN A HEAP THE MINUTE WE REACHED THE INN.
.....
.....
N-NOTHING.
IT'S JUST... WELL, I'M NOT USED TO...
WHAT...?
...HEARING YOU SAY YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT ME.
VERY STRANGE. BUT--
AHH, SHUT YOUR YAP. I TAKE IT BACK ALREADY.
FIGURES. JUST WHEN I WAS GOING TO SAY IT MADE ME SO HAPPY.



SHIT... WHAT A HUGE FRIGGIN' WASTE OF TIME.

YEAH.

HUH. GUESS YOU SHOULD NEVER TEAM UP WITH A BUNCH OF STRANGERS OUTTA NOWHERE.
SO-- WHAT NEXT?
.....
.....
MANJI..? I...EVEN AFTER ALL THIS...
...I STILL WANT TO GO AFTER HIM .. ANOTSU KAGEHISA.
.....
OKAY.. BUT I SURE HOPE YOU GET THE PICTURE, HERE.
IT'S JUST LIKE SHIRA SAID--
--THE ONLY ONE OF US WHO HAS ANT CHANCE OF CLEARING THE SEKISHO...
...IS YOU.

IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN'T FIGHT MY WAY THROUGH.
BUT IF I DO, WE'LL HAVE HALF THE COPS IN EDO ON OUR ASS. NOT EXACTLY A GREAT WAY TO GO LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.
AND THEY'LL SUSPECT YOU, TOO, BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN WITH ME.
NOW, IF WE JUST WAIT, EVENTUALLY HE COMES BACK TO EDO.
SO... WHAT'S THE RUSH?
DO YOU THINK THEY KNOW WHERE ANOTSU'S GOING?
HYAKURIN AND HER GANG, I MEAN.
YEAH. SEEMS THEY KNOW SOMETHING. BUT THAT BITCH...
...SHE'LL TEASE ME WITH IT, BUT SHE WON'T SAY A THING.

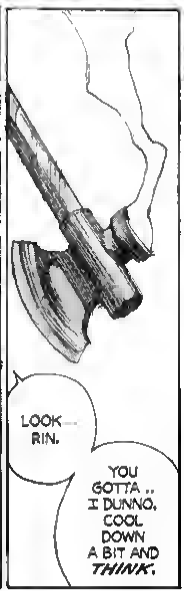
REALLY? SHE KNOWS? THEN WHY DON'T I TRY ASKING HER?
YOU KNOW, WOMAN TO WOMAN. MAYBE THEN SHE'LL--
LISTEN, GIRL.
DID YOU LISTEN TO A WORD I'VE BEEN SAYING?
THE PROBLEM ISN'T KNOWING WHERE HE IS.
THE PROBLEM IS I CAN'T--
MANJI, WAIT. HEAR ME OUT.
IF YOU CAN'T GO, THAT'S HOW IT'LL HAVE TO BE.
I... I STILL INTEND TO GO BY MYSELF.

JESUS CHRIST...! LISTEN, GIRL--
NO, MANJI! YOU LISTEN!
...I'VE ONLY BEEN ABLE TO MEET ANOTSU BY BLIND CHANCE.
UP UNTIL NOW, WHEREVER WE'VE GONE, WHOEVER WE'VE FOUGHT...
I DON'T KNOW IF HE'S JUST THAT GOOD, OR I'M JUST THAT BAD.
MAYBE IT'S BOTH.

THAT MUCH WE KNOW FOR SURE.
BUT RIGHT NOW HE'S HEADED FOR KAGA TO MEET SOMEONE. WHEREVER IT IS HE'S GOING, HE'S GOING TO STAY THERE UNTIL HE'S FINISHED HIS BUSINESS.
...I'M SURE I CAN TRACK HIM DOWN.
OKAY. I'VE NEVER BEEN TO KAGA. BUT IF I JUST KNOW THE NAME OF THE PLACE HE'S GOING,
I HAVE TO MEET THAT MAN AGAIN.
I...

YOU GONNA EAT THAT?
OR JUST MASH IT UP?

EH...?
OH, FUCK!


LOOK... RIN.
YOU GOTTA .. I DUNNO. COOL DOWN A BIT AND THINK.

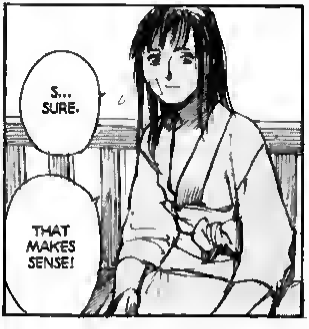
THIS ISN'T ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT YOU CAN TRACK HIM DOWN. BUT THE FACT THAT IT'S JUST YOU, BY YOURSELF.
YOU'RE NOT THINKING YOU CAN BEAT HIM IF YOU CATCH HIM OFF-GUARD, ARE YOU?
NO. NO, I'M NOT THAT SELF-DELUDED, MANJI.
I ALREADY TRIED IT ONCE. I LEARNED MY LESSON.
IT'S JUST..
HOW SHOULD I PUT IT..?
IF... IF IT'S JUST ME, ALONE.. I'VE GOT THIS FEELING ..
.. HE WON'T DRAW HIS SWORD.
HAAH ..?!
I KNOW, I KNOW! BUT...
I JUST HAVE THIS.. THIS FEEL-ING.

WELL, I GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, KID. I REALLY DO.
THAT OLD SAYING THAT "SOME FOLK DON'T LEARN UNLESS IT KILLS THEM"...? DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT YOU!
SORRY, MANJI. FORGET IT. I WASN'T REALLY BEING SERIOUS.

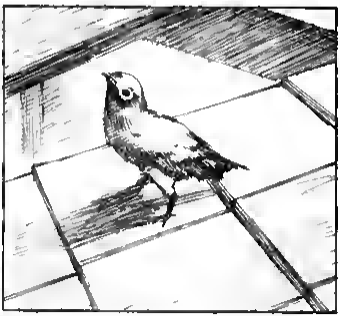
IN ANY CASE...
...ENOUGH OF THIS CRAP FOR NOW.

JUST STAY STRETCHED OUT HERE FOR A DAY LIKE A GOOD GIRL.
BUT, TELL YOU WHAT-- WHEN WE GET UP TOMOR-ROW?
IF YOU STILL FEEL THE SAME WAY...

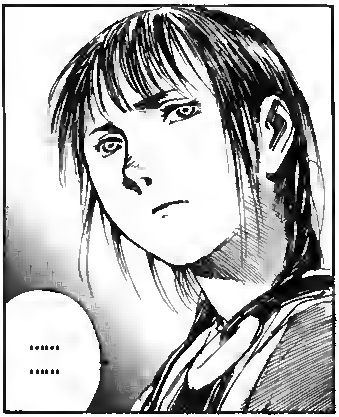
...WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT SOME MORE. ALL RIGHT?

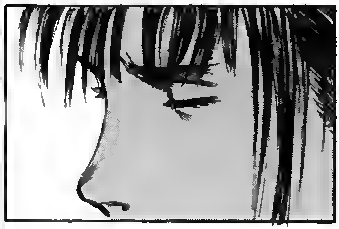

S... SURE.
THAT MAKES SENSE!

UM... THESE MUSUBI RICE BALLS?
DID YOU LEAVE THEM FOR ME?
HEY, IT'S NOT LIKE I MADE THE GODDAMN THINGS.
I JUST ASKED THE COOK TO BRING SOME UP.
WOW...
WHAT? SOME-THING WRONG?
NO. JUST .. THAT WAS NICE OF YOU.
THANKS.
SHEEE-IT! HOW HARD DID THAT DAMN SHIRA HIT YOU IN THE HEAD, ANYWAY?!
MANJI!! HE DIDN'T HIT MY HEAD AT ALL! GEEZ!



"I'M LEAVING SOME MONEY FOR THE ROOM. FORGIVE ME."

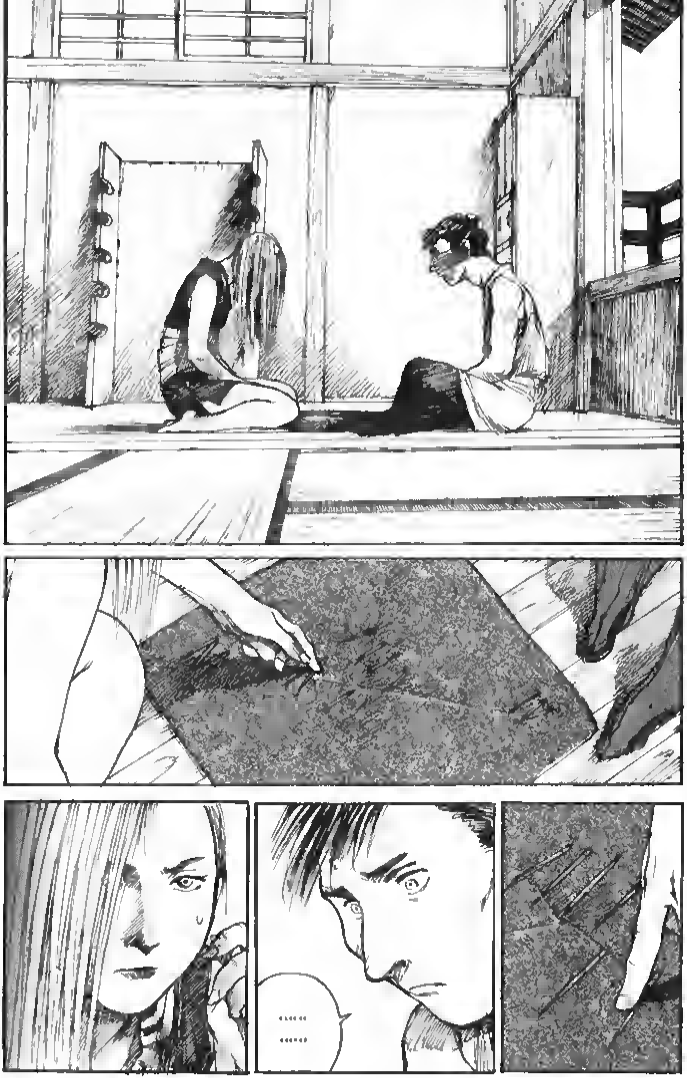




Uh... EXCUSE ME... BUT...
.....
.....
.....
.....
YOU CAN ASK WHEN YOU GET TO KAGA.
THE SHINGYŌTŌ-RYŪ SWORD SCHOOL, IBANE SHINANJO. I DON'T KNOW THE EXACT LOCATION.

MOUNTAIN ROADS ARE LONG AND HARD FOR A WOMAN ALONE.
BE CAREFUL ALONG THE WAY.

STORM
Part 1



AH?!
I WON . ! I WON!
...ISN'T IT?
THAT IS A WIN...
RIGHT?!
HUH ..? HEY!
WELL, LOOKS LIKE YOU FINALLY GOT THE KNACK, HUH?
I BLEW IT, FOR SURE.
WAIT A SEC... YOU JUST LET YOURSELF LOSE, DIDN'T YOU?
NO, NO... THANK YOU, SHINRIJI.
H-HUH?!
OH, NO! I'D NEVER.. NO WAY!
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I UNDER-STAND. IT'S LIKE, NOW AND THEN...
...YOU REALLY TRY TO LOOK OUT FOR ME.
Ah, SHEESH, MA'AM.
I ALWAYS GET SO EMBARRASSED WHEN YOU PRAISE ME LIKE THAT...
EH HEH HEH

HAIEE YAAH!
FRAK
OH, YESSSSS YOU DID! YOU LOST ON PURPOSE!
HEH, HEH. YEAH, OKAY-- IT'S TRUE. I'M BAD AT STUPID LITTLE GAMES LIKE THAT. WELL, EXCUSE ME!
BUT YOU THINK YOU CAN TREAT ME LIKE SOME DUMB BLONDE THAT GETS OFF ON HAVING MEN TREAT HER LIKE A BIMBO?! DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH, YOU JERK!
HAVING SOME MISERABLE, WIMPY, LAME-ASS PUNK LIKE YOU CUT ME SLACK IS MORE HUMILIATING THAN..THAN.. WALKING DOWN THE STREET BUCK NAKED!
BUGGHK HYAGUPIIN GHHK WE GOEGA GET BACK TO WRRGHK
CHOPK
I GOTTA WIN ONCE! JUST ONCE, ALL ON MY OWN!
SO YOU TRY THAT STUNT AGAIN, WISE-ASS, AND YOU'LL BE DIGGING THAT GAME OUT OF YOUR LEFT NOSTRIL!
Y-YES, MA'AM

WHAT NOW...?
HEY...?
OH, MY

YO.

I CAME FOR THE ANSWER...
...TO WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT YESTERDAY.
"YESTER-DAY"...?
SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOUR MEMORY?
ANOTSU. WHERE HE'S GOING.
??
PARDON ME? WHAT'S THIS ABOUT MY MEMORY...
...MANJI, DEAR?

YOU'RE THE ONE WITH MEMORY PROBLEMS, NOT ME.
"IF YOU'RE NOT ONE OF US, I CAN'T TELL YOU!"
THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED. I'M NOT LEAVING WITHOUT AN ANSWER.
OH, REALLY? THEN YOU'VE DECIDED TO SIGN ON AGAIN. .?
NO.
NOW, TALK. WHERE'S HE GOING?
WELL, GOSH-A-ROOTIE! UNFORTUNATELY, ME AND OL' SHINRIJI HERE WERE JUST HEADING OUT FOR SOME GRUB.
COULDN'T YOU COME BACK SOME OTHER TIME? WE CAN TALK THEN...OR MAYBE MEAN MISTER MANJI WOULD LIKE TO JOIN US..?

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS SHIT.
COUGH IT UP, OR I'LL CUT YOUR HEART OUT.
WHOA.
HARUKI!
Humph...
AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU JUST SAT AROUND LIKE A STONE BUDDHA.
TELL ALL, SWEET THING. IF IT'S AMUSING ENOUGH, MAYBE I'LL SHARE.
OKAY... IF YOU'LL CHILL OUT.
LOOK.. JUST CUT THE CRAP, OKAY?

"WHEN I GOT UP THIS MORNING, RIN WAS GONE. IT'S HAPPENED BEFORE, BUT THIS TIME'S DIFFERENT.
"SHE'S HEADING FOR KAGA BY *HERSELF*, THE LITTLE IDIOT."
KAGA..? NO, DON'T TELL ME.
AFTER ANOTSU ..?
GEE... DON'T YOU THINK HE'S A BIT STRONG FOR HER...?
NO KIDDING. TALK ABOUT "FOOLS RUSH IN," EH?
I KNOW THAT, DAMMIT! THAT'S WHY I'M IN A *HURRY!*
WHY THE HELL ELSE WOULD SHE GO?!
AND HOW ARE YOU GOING TO FOLLOW HER?
I'LL CUT MY WAY THROUGH THE *SEKISHO*. THERE'LL BE A SHITSTORM, FOR SURE ..
..BUT I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.
THE KOBOTOKE *SEKISHO*?!
YEAH. IF I'M ON MY OWN, I CAN DO IT.

JUST HOLD YOUR HORSES, MISTER MANJI! ARE YOU JUST OVER-CONFIDENT?
OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT CENTURY THIS IS?
...THIS ISN'T SOME STAGE SHOW, MY FRIEND.
..DON'T TELL ME YOU THINK YOU CAN GET THROUGH A *SEKISHO* JUST BY SWINGING AROUND ALL THOSE FANCY SLICERS YOU HAVE?
MAYBE AFTER CUTTING DOWN A HUNDRED GUYS YOU JUST DON'T GIVE A SHIT ANY MORE, BUT...
IN TIMES LIKE THESE...
YOU BUY THE *BAN-SHI*...
...OR BRIBE SOME LOCAL BIGWIG TO ESCORT YOU THROUGH.

WHAT IT REALLY COMES DOWN TO, WHAT *REALLY* MATTERS, IS...
CASH-OLA!
BUT EVEN *THAT'S* NO GUARANTEE.
TRUTH IS, IT'S RARER FOR THINGS TO GO *RIGHT*.
AND IF IT GOES WRONG, AND YOU END UP HAVING TO ESCAPE FROM ALL THOSE *BANSHI*...
...HOW ARE YOU GONNA TRACK HER DOWN?
WOMEN GET STOPPED AT THE *SEKISHO*, EVEN *WITH* A *TEGATA*. AND BESIDES, THE GIRL DOESN'T KNOW KAGA ANY BETTER THAN YOU DO.
SO DON'T GET YOUR SHORTS IN A KNOT.
SHE'S NOT GOING TO CATCH ANOTSU *THAT* EASY.
SO WHY DON'T YOU TRY SOMETHING MORE SENSI-BLE...?
LIKE *WHAT*, DAMN IT?! THE BOTTOM LINE IS..
NO MONEY, NO CHOICE! RIGHT?

NO, NO, NO!
WHAT I'M SAYING IS...
..DON'T THINK OF HOW TO CLEAR THE SEKISHO.
THINK A STEP AHEAD.
?
LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE.
WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO GET TO KAGA...
...IS A LITTLE OL' TSUKO TEGATA. THAT'S ALL. YEAH?
"CUT TO THE CHASE," SHE SAYS. "GET A TEGATA," SHE SAYS. LOOK, BLONDIE...
...FOR ME, THAT'S HARDER THAN CUTTING MY WAY THROUGH THE DAMN SEKISHO!
DON'T YOU HAVE A FRIGGIN' CLUE? EH?!

LOOK... OF *COURSE* I UNDERSTAND. I KNOW THE AUTHORITIES WILL NEVER ISSUE YOU A *TEGATA*.
AND SO... HEH, HEH, HEH...
ALL YOU GOTTA DO...
...IS "BORROW" SOMEONE ELSE'S.
IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
OH, YEAH? AND WHO THE HELL'S GONNA LEND ME ONE?!
YOU GUYS?

HMM. WELL, SUGAR, I'D LOVE TO, BUT...
...LIKE I SAID YESTERDAY, WE MUGAI-RYU FOLK...
...CAN'T EVER TRAVEL TO ANOTHER HAN.
PROBABLY... EVEN IF WE SECRETLY APPLIED FOR A TEGATA, WE'D BE CAUGHT AND STOPPED FROM ON HIGH.
OR IN THE WORST CASE...WE'D GET "DIS-APPEARED."
EH?! W-WE WOULD?!
THEN... HOW THE HELL...? WAIT A SEC...
...YOU WEREN'T SUGGESTING WE ROB SOME TRAVELER ...?
WAY BACK WHEN... THE FIRST NIGHT YOU GUYS STAYED HERE...
REMEM-BER...?

THAT NIGHT I SAID... SOME THINGS...
TO RIN, I MEAN
...THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER LEFT UNSAID. I'M KIND OF REGRETTING THAT, NOW.
SO.
OKAY. TELL ME.
BUT WHETHER YOU GET YOUR *TEGATA* OR NOT...
...DEPENDS ON THAT SWORD ARM OF YOURS
I'LL SET IT UP FOR YOU.
JUST THIS ONCE.

.....
.....

OOG...
I'M STARV-ING.
Grrgg!!

IF I DON'T KEEP MOVING..
...HE MIGHT CATCH UP WITH ME. BUT I GUESS I'M OKAY FOR A FEW MINUTES.

SLURP
SLURP
SLURP

"THAT OLD LADY YAOBIKUNI HAD TOLD ME ABOUT HIM...
GOSH SUDDENLY I'M ALL NOSTALGIC
"AND WHEN I FINALLY FOUND HIM, AND WAS SO HAPPY...
"HE SMACKED ME! HARD!"
.....
.....
..YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BE STRONG YOURSELF, RIGHT?
IF YOU'RE ALWAYS BEING PROTECTED BY SOME TOUGH GUY...

YEAH. MAYBE. HEH, HEH..
RIN .. YOU JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT, DO YOU?
YOU HIRE A BODY-GUARD...
...THEN GO AND SNEAK OUT ON HIM..

Oh, HI! THANKS--- THAT WAS GOOD.
Ah--ER... TH-THANK YOU, MA'AM. Uh...YOU ALL D-DONE...?
?
WELL, YES. I'LL JUST LEAVE THE MONEY HERE.
GOOD! Uh... I MEAN... THANK YOU!
WHAT A P-POLITE YOUNG LADY... HA HA HA!
HUH. THAT WAS WEIRD!

AH...?!
AND THAT WAS EVEN WEIRDER!
WHY THE HECK WOULD SOME KID BE SCARED OF ME?

IT'S NOT THAT STRANGE TO SEE A WOMAN WITH A SWORD.
I HAD IT ON THE ROAD TO NAITŌ SHINJUKU, TOO, AND NO ONE SAID A THING.
AHH MAYBE I'M JUST PARANOID OR SOMETHING
MMM ONCE YOU GET THIS FAR OUT OF TOWN...
...IT'S SO NICE AND--

SWIP
KSSH
KKK
SKSSH
H--
-hahh-
-hahh-
-hhhff-
-hff
-hahh
-hahh

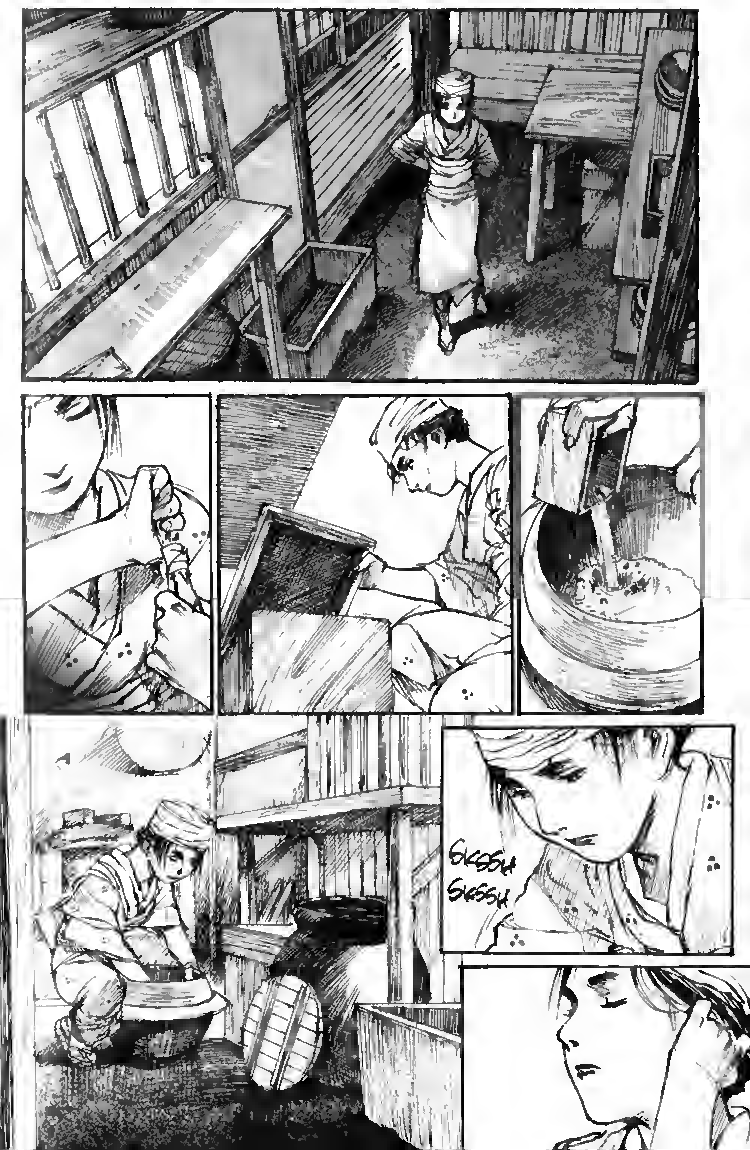
N-NO...
.....
OH, NO, NO, NO!!
NNG...
Sniff
"WANTED, DEAD OR ALIVE, FOR THE MURDER OF TWO TRAVELERS. REWARD: TEN RYO."

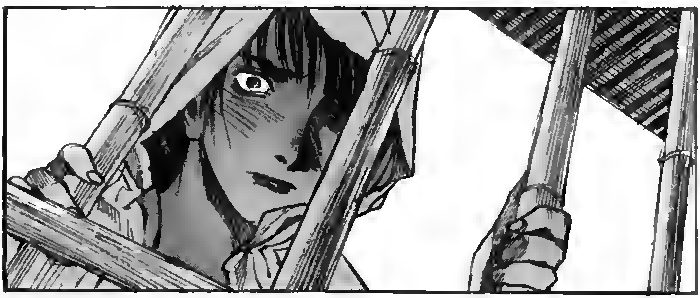
STORM
Part 2

HEY, DID YOU SEE THIS WANTED POSTER?
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? RIGHT ON THE MAIN ROAD!
YEAH, I SAW IT.
AND ONLY A COUPLE OF RI AWAY, TOO!
HMM... TWO TRAVELING MEDICINE SALESMEN... HACKED TO PIECES...
HEH... IT FIGURES!
THE ITTŌ-RYŪ, AGAIN.

LOOKS LIKE THESE GUYS WERE SUPPLYING THEM.
DAMN. I KNOW THE ITTŌ-RYŪ GOT THE MOST FOLLOWERS AND THE MOST ENEMIES IN ALL OF EDO...
...BUT TO KILL A COUPLE OF PILL PUSHERS JUST 'CAUSE THEY SOLD TO THE ITTŌ-RYŪ? THAT AIN'T RIGHT.
SAY... WASN'T THAT THE DAY SOME DUDE PICKED A FIGHT WITH A COUPLE OF ITTŌ-RYŪ GUYS?
REMEMBER? RIGHT OUT FRONT..?
OH, YEAH! BETCHA THAT'S HIM! DID HE LOOK LIKE THE DRAWING?
I DON'T REMEMBER HIS FACE.
WHAT ELSE.. HMM. SOME WHORE LOST HER LEG, TOO. THEY DUNNO IF SHE'S GONNA MAKE IT.
THAT'S AWFUL!
MAN, SOUNDS LIKE THE GUY'S TOTALLY CRAZED... HEY, YOU BE CAREFUL, OKAY?!
AS IF I EVER GET PAST THE FRONT DOOR!
THEY'VE GOT MY SCHEDULE RIGGED SO I'M COOKING, DOING THE LAUNDRY, OR FILLING SOME BED MORNING TO NIGHT.

GEEZ.. CAN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING NICE, LIKE I DUNNO..
"OOH, THAT'S SO SCARY! I WISH YOU COULD JUST STAY HERE ALL THE TIME AND PROTECT ME!"
WELL, EX-CUSE ME!
LOOK-- I'LL COME BY AGAIN IN TEN DAYS, MAX. OKAY?
THEN MAKE SURE YOU SAVE IT ALL FOR ME, OKAY, HONEY?
WELL, BACK TO WORK.


SIGGH
SIGGH



I KNOW YOU MUST HAVE HEARD...
P- PLEASE... JUST LISTEN TO ME. .!
...BUT PLEASE, JUST HEAR ME OUT!
...SOME TERRIBLE THINGS, BUT...
JUST LET ME IN...
AND NOW IT'S ALL SO.. IT'S GOTTEN SO.. AWFUL...
THE CHARGES ARE FALSE!
PLEASE, PLEASE HELP ME... FOR GOD'S SAKE...
PLEASE LET ME IN...
I DIDN'T DO IT! I SWEAR!

I... I BEG YOU..
OKAY. COME AROUND THE BACK.
AND MAKE SURE NO ONE SEES YOU!
ABAYAMA, SIR...?
HUH?

AH, MAKOTO, MY BOY.
LAID BACK OLD COOT.
HEH... I CAN'T GET OVER HAVING OUR OWN BATH IN THIS PLACE! I LOVE IT!
ER...YES, SIR.
ABAYAMA, SIR? YOU WANTED TO HEAR THE REPORT AS SOON AS IT CAME IN..
EH? AH, YES.
OKAY--OF THE TWELVE PEOPLE WE SENT OUT AS DECOYS...
...ONLY THREE CAME BACK, SIR. AND ALL OF THEM WOUNDED.
ONE OF THEM... TAMAZAKI.
THE TENDONS IN HIS SWORD ARM WERE SEVERED BY SOME SORT OF ARROW-LIKE WEAPON.. HE'S PERMANENTLY OUT OF ACTION, SIR.
ANOTHER DAMN BLOOD-BATH, IS IT?
NINE MEN...!

EITHER WE CHOSE THE WRONG MEN, OR THE WRONG ENEMY.
AND THE WOMEN...? WHAT ABOUT THEM?
MISS HAYA AND MISS YAE ARE FINE, SIR.
BUT MISS O-SEI... SHE... SHE LOST ONE OF HER LEGS.
DAMN IT! DIDN'T I TELL YOU?!
KAGEHISA'S TOO DAMN NAIVE ABOUT THE WORLD.
I'LL DROP BY YUKIMACHI TO PAY MY CONDOLENCES IN PERSON.
WE DID BAD BY HER. POOR GIRL.
I'M TOLD THE MASTER MADE IT SAFELY THROUGH THE KOBOTOKE *SEKISHO*.
YES, SIR.
BUT... IT WAS WORTH IT, WASN'T IT?
OH! THAT REMINDS ME!

SORRY, SIR.
THIS ARRIVED FROM THE MASTER JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO.
DID YOU READ IT?
NO, SIR.
MAKOTO?
ER... IN THAT CASE..
..IF I MIGHT EXCUSE MYSELF ..?

I DIDN'T PLAY STRAIGHT WITH YOU, EITHER.
NOT TELLING YOU ABOUT THE DECOY'S...
YES...?
Uh...
THAT'S OKAY, SIR.

HERE.
TH... THANK YOU.
YOU CAME BACK ALONG THE RIVER-BANK?
AHH.. YES.
UNTIL I REACHED YOUR PLACE.

I WAS JUST BEIN' NICE WHEN I TOLD YOU I WOULDN'T ASK WHAT YOU GUYS WERE UP TO.
BUT IF I'D KNOWN YOU WERE A BUNCH OF MURDERING BUTCHERS...
WELL, KID, TO TELL THE TRUTH, I'M NOT TOO THRILLED TO GET DRAGGED INTO THIS.
BUT I TOLD YOU-- THAT WASN'T ME!
NOW, THAT'S INTERESTIN'.
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY "THAT WASN'T US"...?
.....
.....
BESIDES THE TWO OF YOU IN THE POSTER..
HOLD ON A SEC.. EXPLAIN SOMETHIN' TO ME, WILL YA?
THERE WAS THAT OTHER GUY, RIGHT? THE TALL DUDE.
WHY'D THEY LEAVE HIM OUT?
WELL...

MY GUESS IS IT'S BECAUSE...
...HE'S THE GUY WHO *REPORTED* IT.
LOOK, IF I TRY TO EXPLAIN IT ALL, IT'LL TAKE FOREVER.
BUT BASICALLY, WHEN WE WERE STAYING HERE, BEFORE... AT *THAT* TIME WE WERE WORKING TOGETHER.
AND YES, IT'S TRUE, WE *WERE* TRYING TO KILL SOMEONE. A CERTAIN, *SPECIAL* SOMEONE.
BUT WE HAD GOOD REASONS FOR TRYING TO KILL THAT GUY! HE...
...HE KILLED MY PARENTS.
AH?! NO KIDDING!
SO *THAT'S* IT.
WELL, GEEZ. WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST *SAY* SO?
SO, HOW'D IT TURN OUT? DID YOU GET THE BASTARD?
NO. I WISH TO GOD WE HAD.

"THE GUY WHO WAS WITH US BEFORE, THE TALL ONE?
"HE WAS THE ONE WHO KILLED THOSE TWO SO-CALLED 'MEDICINE SALESMEN.' BUT THAT HAD TO HAPPEN. THE WAY THINGS TURNED OUT... WITH THEM IT WAS KILL OR BE KILLED, I SWEAR! B-BUT... NOT THE GIRL..."
BUT THE MAN WE WERE WAITING FOR NEVER APPEARED.
AND YOU'VE HEARD WHAT HAPPENED NEXT. ANYWAY, IN THE END, WE TURNED ON EACH OTHER.
OH, GOD... I JUST NEVER DREAMED THINGS COULD...
...GET SO OUT OF CONTROL!
WH... WHAT SHOULD I DO..?
.....
.....
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?
WELL...?

TH-THANK YOU!
Y-YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH THIS MEANS TO ME...
THIS SIMPLE CUP OF TEA
JUST ONE OF HAJI
EH?! Oh, um, YOU'RE WELCOME.
WELL, um... ANYWAY... SNIFF
THAT'S THE SITUATION, BUT...
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE STILL PRETTY OUT OF IT, KID.
WELL.... I KNOW WHERE MY ENEMY'S HEADED.
SO, WHAT I'M THINKING OF DOING IS...
...GOING TO KAGA TO KILL HIM.
BUT MAYBE THAT'S... MAYBE IT'S...
"IMPOSSIBLE"...?
YEAH.

I DON'T WANT TO SAY ANYTHING TO HURT YOU, SWEETHEART, BUT HERE'S MY ADVICE-- GO HOME.
LOOK...
REALLY. THEN JUST KEEP A LOW PROFILE, Y'KNOW?
CHANGE YOUR KIMONO, CHANGE YOUR HAIR... AND NO ONE'LL EVER KNOW.
NOT FROM THAT POSTER, ANYWAY.
.....
UM..
I KNOW IT'S ASKING A LOT, BUT...
...COULD I... BORROW ONE OF YOURS?
HUH?
MY KIMONO'S ALL MUDDY, AND... WELL...
SURE, SURE. NO PROBLEM, GIRL. BUT...
...JUST TELL ME ONE THING.

TELL ME YOU'RE NOT THINKING YOU CAN JUST...
CHANGE YOUR CLOTHES AND YOUR HAIR AND STROLL RIGHT THROUGH THE SEKISHO.?
NO WAY? YOU SURE?
.....
.....
.....
.....
LOOK, KID... AROUND PLACES LIKE THE SHI-SHUKU, Y'KNOW?
YOU SEE PEOPLE LIKE THAT, NOW AND THEN.
POOR FOOLS WHO THINK THEY CAN FOOL THE BANSHI BY SLAPPING ON SOME HALF-ASSED DISGUISE OR SOMETHING. CRIMINALS, MOSTLY.
WOW.. REALLY?
AND SO? WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM?
THEY GET CAUGHT, OF COURSE. THEN THEY GET THEIR HEADS CHOPPED OFF.

AS FAR AS I'VE EVER HEARD, THERE'S ONLY ONE GUY WHO EVER MADE IT SAFELY TO ANOTHER *HAN*.
THE *BANSHI* DIDN'T KNOW FOR SURE WHAT HIS FACE LOOKED LIKE, Y'SEE?
ALL THEY KNEW WAS HE HAD THIS HUGE BIRTH-MARK ON HIS KNEE.
WHAT A BUMMER, RIGHT? HE HAD SOME-THING THAT GAVE HIM AWAY EVEN MORE THAN HIS FACE COULD.
SO HOW DO YOU THINK HE MADE IT THROUGH?
...?
TOOK IT OFF, HE DID! FROM HERE ON DOWN!
YEP-- SAWED HIS OWN LEG OFF!
OOH... MAYBE...
MAYBE I *SHOULD* JUST... GO BACK.

D-DAMN IT! THIS TIME... THIS TIME I THOUGHT I HAD HIM TRAPPED.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S TRAPPED, HON.
LOOK . WHAT GOOD WOULD IT DO TO GET YOURSELF KILLED?

WAIT A MINUTE...
WHAT YOU TOLD ME BEFORE!
DO YOU REMEMBER?
"BEFORE"...? WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOU KNOW!
WHEN WE WERE STAYING HERE! YOU SAID THERE WAS A WAY ANYONE COULD GET THROUGH THE SEKISHO!
I...
I WANT TO TRY IT!

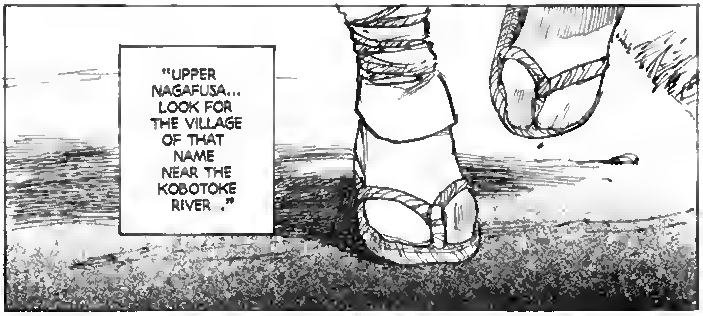
FORGET IT, KID. IT'S NOT WORTH IT.
IT'S MY ONLY CHOICE.
RIGHT?!
IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD, I'M A CRIMINAL, WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE!
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN EVEN GET BACK TO EDO IN ONE PIECE!
BUT...
...IF I CAN MAKE IT TO ANOTHER HAN, I'M FREE! THEN EVERYTHING WORKS!
THERE'S NOWHERE LEFT EXCEPT STRAIGHT AHEAD, TO FIND THE MAN WHO MURDERED MY PARENTS!

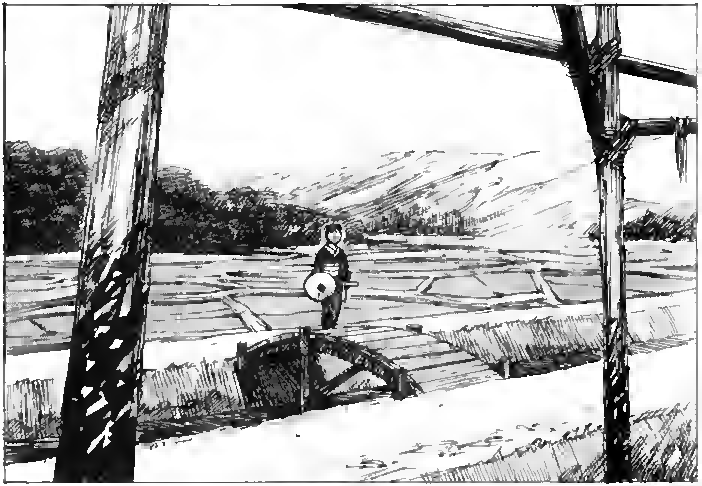
SO, PLEASE!!
PLEASE TELL ME HOW TO DO IT!

.....
.....
I'M WARNIN' YOU, GIRL.

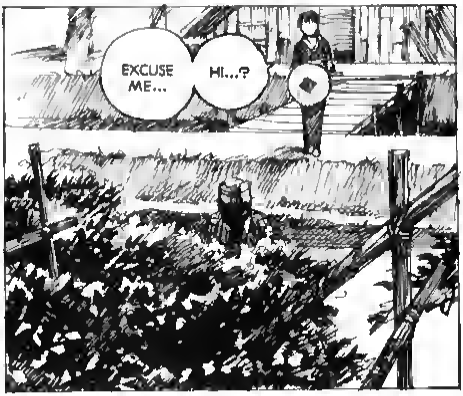
ONE LITTLE MISTAKE, AND YOU'RE DEAD.
AND YOU CAN TAKE THAT ONE TO THE BANK!

STIGMA
Part 2


"UPPER NAGAFUSA... LOOK FOR THE VILLAGE OF THAT NAME NEAR THE KOBOTOKE RIVER."



OH!


EXCUSE ME...
HI...?

HMM.. A PLACE T' STAY, EH? TH' ONLY PLACE 'ROUND HERE IS SŌMACHI'S JOINT.
JUST TAKE TH' PATH DOWN 'ROUND THAT BEND AN' YER THERE.
T'AIN'T MUCH OF A PLACE. GOT A SIGN OUT FRONT WHAT SAYS "NAKAYA."
SO I FOLLOW THIS ROAD ALONG THE RIVER, RIGHT?
THAT AIN'T NO RIVER, DARLIN'... THAT THERE'S AN IRRIGATION DITCH.
BUT IT DON'T HARDLY MATTER, DO IT? WATER IS WATER! BWA HAW HAW!
HA HA... YES! WELL, THANK YOU SO MUCH.

PARDON ME?
EXCUSE ME?
SŌ-HACHI!
HUH?!
WE GOT A GUEST?!
.....?

EXCUSE ME!
IS ANY-BODY--
YES, MA'AM, YES, YES! WE'RE OPEN!
OH! HELLO.
THANK GOODNESS! I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER WHERE I COULD POSSIBLY GO IF YOU WERE CLOSED.
AS YOU SHOULD'A, MA'AM... THIS HERE VILLAGE ONLY GOT BUT ONE INN AND ONE OLD TEA HOUSE.
WE DON'T HARDLY GET ANYONE STAYIN' THE NIGHT IN THESE PARTS ANYMORE.
BUT... SAVE THE TALKING! COME IN, COME RIGHT ON IN.

HAVE SOME *SAKE*.. NO, NO, BAD CALL. *HEY!* SWEET BARLEY TEA FOR THE SWEET YOUNG MISS!
AND SO... *SO!* YOU MUST BE TIRED, EH? 'COURSE YOU ARE! YOU GET SETTLED INTO YOUR ROOM AND WE'LL GET THE BATH ALL HOT 'N STEAMIN' FOR YOU IN NO TIME. THEN--
TH-THANK YOU, THAT SOUNDS GREAT, BUT I SHOULD TELL YOU UP FRONT... I, Uh...
HEH, HEH... ACTUALLY, I WAS PLANNING TO GO ON THROUGH THE *SEKISHO* TODAY.
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU JUST WANT A BATH.. WASH OFF SOME A' THAT DIRT AND GRIME. BEEN ON THE ROAD, EH?
IT'S A LONG OLD HIKE FROM EDO.
YES, YES... THAT'S PRETTY MUCH IT.
THAT'S QUITE UNUSUAL. MOST FOLK COMING THIS WAY FROM EDO JUST STOP OVER AT SHINJUKU.
WELL, Uh.. I'D PLANNED TO DO THAT, AT FIRST, BUT...
HAH? OH. OH, YEAH, I SEE.
AH, WELL..

...ALL THE SHI-SHUKU HAVE LOTS OF, YOU KNOW, "THAT KIND" OF INN...
NYA HAR HAR HAR! NOW I GET IT! YESSIR!
THEY AIN'T NO PLACE FOR A NICE YOUNG LADY LIKE YOU TO STAY, ARE THEY?
WELL, LEMME TELL YA... THE RICE THEM BANSHI AT KOBOTOKE EAT?
IT ALL COMES FROM EITHER LOWER NAGAFUSA DOWN THE HILL THERE, OR FROM RIGHT HERE IN OLD UPPER NAGAFUSA. SO WE GOT LOTS OF FOLKS WHO KNOW ALL ABOUT THEM SEKISHO.
OH, REALLY?
SURE... IF YOU GOT THE TIME, YOU JUST COLLAR THE FIRST GENT YOU SEE LUGGIN' SOME RICE AND GET HIM TALKIN' ABOUT IT.
LEMME TELL YA-- YOU'LL HEAR MORE'N YOU WANNA KNOW 'BOUT 'EM!
WOW, THANKS...
...MAYBE I SHOULD JUST ASK RIGHT OUT.
ALTHOUGH I'M SORT OF...
...EMBARRASSED, ACTUALLY
NYA HAR HAR!
C'MON, SPIT IT OUT, DARLIN'!
ACTUALLY...

I WANT YOU TO ADOPT ME.
AS YOUR STEP-DAUGHTER

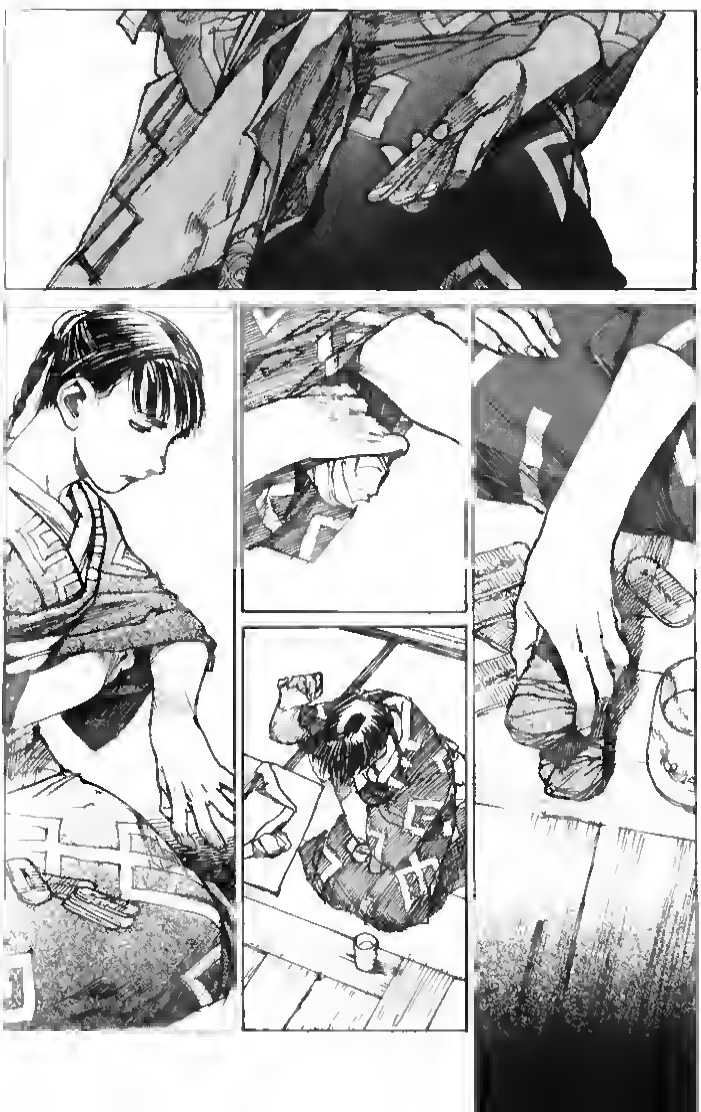
……
……
sigh

LORDY...
...SO *THAT'S* WHAT IT IS, IS IT?
AND HERE I THOUGHT Y'ALL WERE A NICE, *RESPECT-ABLE* GIRL.
NOW... WHAT LITTLE BIRD WHISPERED THIS INTO THEM CUTE LITTLE EARS OF YOURS, EH?
A... *CERTAIN PERSON* TOLD ME.
SHE TOLD ME A... A NUMBER OF THINGS.
THAT YOU SUPPLY THE *BANSHI* WITH MORE THAN RICE AND *SAKE*.
THAT SOME OF YOU VILLAGERS EVEN SIGN ON AS DAY LABORERS AT KOBOTOKE.
AND SINCE THE OFFICIALS THERE KNOW ALL YOUR FACES BY HEART...
...THE RESIDENTS OF UPPER NAGAFUSA... AND THEY ALONE...

...CAN GO THROUGH THE *SEKISHO*...
...WITHOUT ANY *TEGATA* AT ALL.
AND MOREOVER, THAT IT'S NOT JUST THE PEOPLE ACTUALLY LIVING UNDER EACH ROOF..
...BUT YOUR RELATIVES BY BLOOD OR MARRIAGE AS WELL.
AS LONG AS YOU REGISTER THEM WITH THE *BANSHI* AT THE *SEKISHO*, THEY CAN GET THE SAME EXEMPTION.
AND LASTLY...
.SHE TOLD ME THERE ARE FUGITIVES WHO GET THROUGH THE *SEKISHO* BY MASQUERADING AS PEOPLE'S RELATIVES.
AND THAT THERE ARE.. CERTAIN VILLAGERS WHO'LL HELP THEM DO IT. FOR *CASH*.

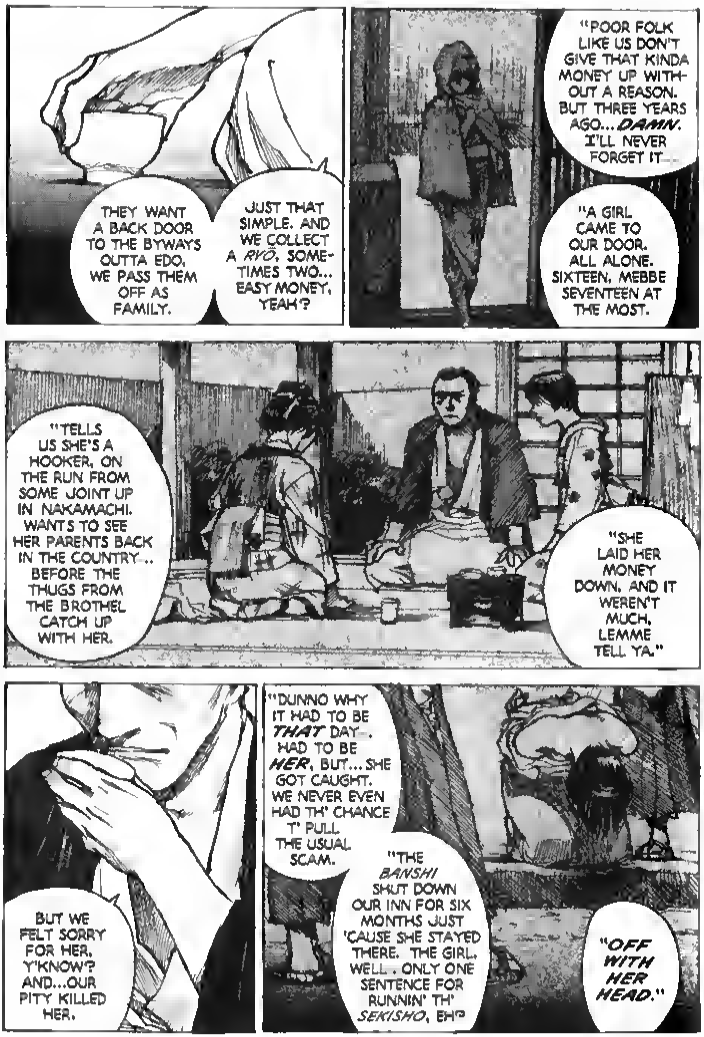
AND SO...? WHY ASK US?
MEBBE WE AIN'T...
AW, HECK... NO POINT IN HIDING IT.
YEAH. YOU'RE RIGHT. WE GOT SOMETHIN' TO DO WITH IT.
I CAME TO YOUR INN OUT OF *INTUI-TION.*
I FIGURED THESE THINGS HAD TO BE PLAN-NED AND ARRANGED SOMEPLACE WHERE PEOPLE WERE ALWAYS COMING AND GOING.
OF COURSE I'LL BE *EXTREMELY* GENEROUS IN MY THANKS.
SO, PLEASE..

MAN, OH MAN.. AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU WERE A REAL GUEST.
GOT ME ALL WORKED UP, Y'DID.
WELL, KID... SORRY. YOU'RE A BIT TOO LATE. ALL THAT STUFF WHOEVER IT WAS TOLD YA...?
THAT'S HISTORY. WE'VE WASHED OUR HANDS OF IT, GONE STRAIGHT. COMPLETE-LY.
AND ANYHOW, DON'T EVEN THINK IT. NOT IF Y'KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YA.
JUST HAVE YERSELF A NICE, HOT BATH, A GOOD MEAL, AND TOMORROW MORNING HEAD ON BACK TO--



GOLD. TWENTY-ONE RYÔ, SEVEN MON.
IT'S ALL I HAVE.
.... .
.... !
.... .
DAMN
A SWEET YOUNG THING LIKE YOU... HAVIN' THE GUTS T' THROW AWAY THAT KINDA MONEY... EVER'THING YOU GOT...

WHAT'S DRIVIN' YOU TO THIS, GIRL? ARE YOU JUST PLUMB CRAZY?
MAYBE. MAYBE SO. PERHAPS THAT'S WHAT IT IS.
BUT ALL THAT I CAN DO RIGHT HERE AND NOW...
...IS BOW. BOW DEEPLY... AND PAY.
TAKE IT AS AN ACT OF DESPERATION.
AND PLEASE, IN EXCHANGE. .
YOUNG LADY... LOOK...
...YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND SOMETHIN' HERE.
AND I AIN'T SAYIN' THIS TO BE NASTY, OR 'CAUSE I'M GREEDY AND WANT MORE CASH.
LEMME TELL YA STRAIGHT--
--TRUTH IS, FOLK LIKE YOU HAVE MADE US A PRETTY PENNY SOMETIMES.


THEY WANT A BACK DOOR TO THE BYWAYS OUTTA EDO. WE PASS THEM OFF AS FAMILY.
JUST THAT SIMPLE. AND WE COLLECT A RYŌ, SOMETIMES TWO... EASY MONEY, YEAH?
"POOR FOLK LIKE US DON'T GIVE THAT KINDA MONEY UP WITHOUT A REASON. BUT THREE YEARS AGO... DAMN. I'LL NEVER FORGET IT...
"A GIRL CAME TO OUR DOOR. ALL ALONE. SIXTEEN, MEBBE SEVENTEEN AT THE MOST.
"TELLS US SHE'S A HOOKER, ON THE RUN FROM SOME JOINT UP IN NAKAMACHI. WANTS TO SEE HER PARENTS BACK IN THE COUNTRY.. BEFORE THE THUGS FROM THE BROTHEL CATCH UP WITH HER.
"SHE LAID HER MONEY DOWN, AND IT WEREN'T MUCH, LEMME TELL YA."
BUT WE FELT SORRY FOR HER, Y'KNOW? AND...OUR PITY KILLED HER.
"DUNNO WHY IT HAD TO BE THAT DAY... HAD TO BE HER, BUT... SHE GOT CAUGHT. WE NEVER EVEN HAD TH' CHANCE T' PULL THE USUAL SCAM.
"THE BANSHI SHUT DOWN OUR INN FOR SIX MONTHS JUST 'CAUSE SHE STAYED THERE. THE GIRL, WELL, ONLY ONE SENTENCE FOR RUNNIN' TH' SEKISHO, EH?
"OFF WITH HER HEAD."

GODDAMN BANSHI... THEY'RE A CRUEL BUNCH OF BASTARDS. THEY FORCED US T' BE THERE AT THE EXECUTION.
WATCHING THAT POOR GIRL'S HEAD TUMBLE INTO THE PIT, I THOUGHT T' MYSELF...
WHY? WHY DIDN'T I TRY TO STOP HER WHEN I HAD TH' CHANCE? IF WE'D SENT HER BACK TO THE BROTHEL, HELL, YEAH...
..THERE'D HAVE BEEN A REAL BEATING WAITING FOR HER, BUT SHE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN DEAD.
IT'S HARD ENOUGH ON ME, BUT MY WIFE..
...SHE STILL SEES IT IN HER DREAMS.
SO WHEN A YOUNG WOMAN LIKE YOU COMES ALONG AND ASKS HER FOR THE SAME DAMN THING, WELL....

NO... I CAN'T BELIEVE...
DON'T TELL ME...
YES. IT'S ME.
AND SO, WHILE I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN...
...YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT ON MY ACCOUNT. AS YOU CAN SEE...
...I'M ALREADY SENTENCED TO DEATH.
Heh, heh...

COMRADES
Part 1

MAN, I'M BOILING.

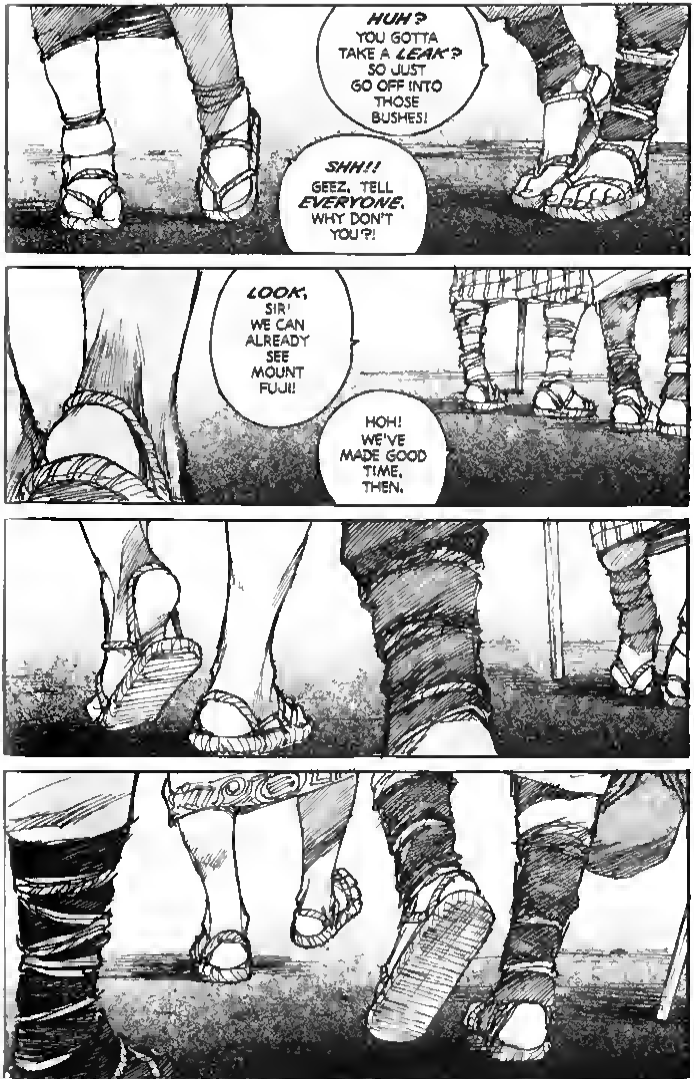
DON'T FEEL LIKE I'M GONNA LOSE THIS ONE. BUT...
...WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS.
IT'D BE EASY ENOUGH TO DICE HIM. YEAH.

BUT IF I GET BLOOD ON THE *TEGATA*...
...IT'LL BE USELESS. *HMM.* KNOCK HIM OUT WITH THE FLAT OF MY SWORD FIRST...?

SHEE-IT!
WHOLE THING'S A FRIGGIN' WASTE OF TIME.

HEH, HEH..
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, EH, BOY?
LETTING YOURSELF GET PUSHED AROUND...
—BY SOME LITTLE GIRL'S STUPID OBSESSION?
I GO ALONG THINKING SHE'S JUST A KID, JUST A LITTLE FOOL. AND THEN...
NAW... MAYBE SHE IS A FOOL.
BUT THEN AGAIN

HEY, IF IT AIN'T KIMURA! WHERE YOU OFF TO TODAY?
NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS!
HUP!
HUP!
HUP!
WHOA! WATCH IT!
COME ON, KAYA... THE INN'S JUST A LITTLE FARTHER UP THE ROAD, HONEST.
WAAH! I C-CAN'T WALK ANOTHER STEP, D-DADDY!

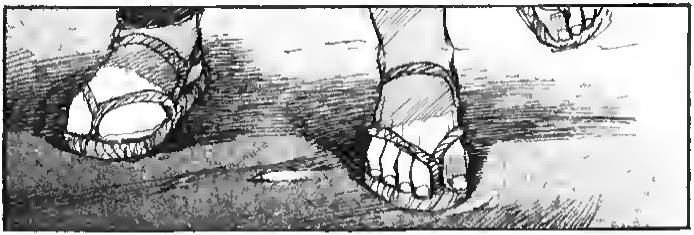

HUH? YOU GOTTA TAKE A LEAK? SO JUST GO OFF INTO THOSE BUSHES!
SHH!! GEEZ, TELL EVERYONE, WHY DON'T YOU?!
LOOK, SIR! WE CAN ALREADY SEE MOUNT FUJI!
HOH! WE'VE MADE GOOD TIME, THEN.

GOD DAMN SUN!
I DO SOMETHING TO GET YOU PISSED OFF AT ME...?
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE AUTUMN, MAN!
BUT WE'RE ROASTING LIKE... LIKE CHICKENS!!
THAT STINKING OLD FART-- SHIT!
HE PISSES ME OFF!
"TRY TO BE USEFUL TO THE BOSS FOR A CHANGE," HE SAYS! YEAH, RIGHT!
DRAG YOUR WRINKLED OLD ASS OFF TO KAGA YOUR OWN FRIGGIN' SELF!
HEY, HANADA.

SHUT UP, WILLYA? IT CREEPS ME OUT, ALL THIS TALKIN' TO YOURSELF.
THE SUN COOKED UP WHAT FEW BRAIN CELLS YOU STARTED WITH OR SOMETHIN'...?
QUIT WHININ'! ANYONE GETS THEIR BRAIN COOKED, IT'S GONNA BE YOU, YOU SKINHEAD PUNK!
SHUT YOUR MOUTH AND CARRY THE BAGGAGE LIKE A GOOD LOSER, URUMA... GOT IT?
WE BET, WE PLAYED, YOU LOST--SO YOU CARRY.
YOU FRIGGIN' CHEATED, MAN! I OUGHTTA KICK YOUR ASS!
HEY.
CUT IT OUT.

AND YOU, HANADA.
IT TAKES MORE THAN A NIGHT OR TWO TO REACH KAGA.
IF THAT'S ALL YOU BROUGHT TO WEAR ON THE ROAD, YOU'RE GOING TO BE SORRY.
BETTER'N MELTING IN THE HEAT, MAN.
EVER SINCE I WAS A BRAT I NEVER GOT BIT BY BUGS, SEE? SO NO PROB.
PROBABLY 'CAUSE YOU'RE FULL OF SHIT INSTEAD'A BLOOD.
YOU WANNA DIE?! HUH? DO YA?!
CUT IT OUT!
GOT A QUESTION FOR YOU, HIGA.
THAT LETTER FROM THE BOSS JUST ASKED FOR ONE GUY.
SO WHY YOU FIGURE THE OLD COOT SENT THREE OF US?
AH, WHO GIVES A CRAP?
I WASN'T ASKIN' YOU, ASSHOLE!
I SAID CUT IT OUT!!

...IT'S ABOUT NOON, ALREADY.
DAMN. FROM THE SHADOWS..
mmph
WHOOPS.
OKAY...



HYAKURIN, YOU DEVIOUS BITCH!
HEH... ONE GUY, OKAY... THREE GUYS IS A DIFFERENT STORY, GIRL!
FROM THOSE CRAZY GET-UPS. .
HELL. GUESS I DON'T NEED TO ASK.
HMM... WAIT A SEC.

THREE OF 'EM. WHICH MEANS...
...I CAN JUST GO AHEAD AND TAKE OUT *TWO*, BLOOD AND GUTS AND ALL.
HEH, HEH. YEAH...
...BE NICE TO HAVE A LITTLE *FUN*.

SKSSH

.....
.....!
YO. SOME COOL TOYS YOU GOT THERE, FRIEND.
YOU JUST WANTED TO SHOW 'EM OFF TO US, OR WHAT?
!
WHOA?! HOLY SHIT!
HUH? HEY! THE SUCKER'S DRAWN, MAN!

HUH.
HOW'D YOU KNOW THAT I WAS COMING FOR YOU?
PSYCHIC POWERS.
HEH, HEH... NAW. WISH IT WERE TRUE, BUT ACTUALLY... THOSE.
?!
GIMME A BREAK!
WHAT THE HELL DIFF DOES THAT MAKE?!
GRAB A BRAIN, DIPSHIT! IT MEANS HE LEFT SOMEWHERE IN A HURRY!
WELL, SHIT!
WHETHER YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY OUT FROM EDO, OR IN FROM KOBOTOKE ..
..THOSE AREN'T ANYTHING A REAL TRAVELER WOULD WEAR.

AH, WELL... GUESS IT'S FOR THE BEST, ANYWAY. HACKING YOU DOWN FROM BEHIND WAS SORTA...
...I DUNNO. *BUGGING ME*, YOU KNOW? *BUSHIDŌ* AND ALL THAT CRAP.
FRANKLY, I DON'T WANT TO WASTE THE TIME, BUT...
...THERE'S *SOMETHING* ABOUT YOU GUYS. THIS COULD BE *FUN*...

COMRADES
Part 2

ABAYAMA SOSUKE, ACTING HEAD OF THE ITTŌ-RYŪ.
I'M HONORED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.
HAJAKI KAGIMURA, THE NEW HEAD OF THE BANSHŪ. I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING TOGETHER.

.....
.....
I SEE. SO, IN SHORT.. YOU'D LIKE TO THROW A BANQUET SO WE ALL CAN GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER?
YOU SEE..
EXACTLY. AND AS AN EXPRESSION OF OUR DEEP SINCERITY IN WELCOMING YOU, THE SWORDSMEN OF THE ITTŌ-RYŪ, TO TEACH AT OUR NEW KŌKENJO.
...RATHER THAN HEARING IT FROM ME TIME AND AGAIN...
...WE THOUGHT IT BETTER TO JUST DOWN A FEW DRINKS TOGETHER.
I--WE ARE DEEPLY HONORED. I DO REALIZE THE IMPORT OF YOUR GENEROUS INVITATION. BUT AS YOU MAY KNOW, OUR LEADER IS CURRENTLY AWAY ON A JOURNEY.
FOR US TO HAVE SUCH AN IMPORTANT EVENT IN HIS ABSENCE MIGHT SEEM... WELL...
HA, HA. FEAR NOT. OF COURSE, WE DON'T MEAN TODAY OR TOMORROW!

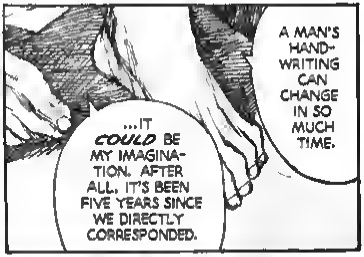
BUT THE SUGGESTION HAD ARISEN, AND I THOUGHT IT BEST TO INFORM YOU WELL IN ADVANCE.
THERE WILL BE NO DIFFICULTY IN ARRANGING OUR LITTLE SIT-DOWN TO TAKE PLACE AT YOUR CONVENIENCE.
THAT'S REALLY TOO KIND OF YOU, SIR BUT MUCH APPRECIATED.
HOWEVER, SINCE IT *IS* DIFFICULT TO RESERVE AN APPROPRIATE BANQUETING HALL AND MAKE OTHER SUCH ARRANGEMENTS ON SHORT NOTICE, IF YOU COULD INFORM US PROMPTLY...
...AS SOON AS YOU FIND OUT THE EXACT DATE WHEN SIR ANOTSU WILL RETURN, WE WOULD BE MOST GRATEFUL.
I ASSURE YOU THAT WOULD BE NO PROBLEM AT ALL, LORD HABAKI.
I'LL SEND A MAN OFF TOMORROW TO ASK OUR LEADER DIRECTLY.
WELL! A PARTY JUST FOR US, ATTENDED BY THE ELITE SWORDSMEN OF THE *BANSHŪ*...
...NOW THAT'S BOUND TO BE QUITE *INTEREST-ING*

IN THAT CASE, WE SHALL DO OUR BEST TO LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS.
HA, HA, HA
JUST AS I'VE HEARD, THE MEN OF THE ITTŌ-RYŪ ALL SPEAK FROM THE HEART. QUITE REFRESHING.
UM... MISTER ABAYAMA, SIR...?

YEAH?
SIR... ABOUT HIGA AND THE REST—
I THOUGHT.. ER—
DIDN'T THE LETTER SAY THAT ONE MAN WAS ENOUGH...? FOR A BODYGUARD.
IT'S JUST.. I MEAN, SIR... IF THREE PEOPLE GO...
...THEN THE EXPENSES TRIPLE. FOOD BILLS, LODGING FOR THREE..
DO YOU THINK THAT LETTER REALLY CAME FROM KAGEHISA?
WELL, MAKOTO?
H-HUM..?

MAYBE NOTHING.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SIR? I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND...
JUST, IT SEEMED TO ME THE HANDWRITING WAS A TAD *DIFFERENT* FROM HOW I REMEMBER HIS BEING.

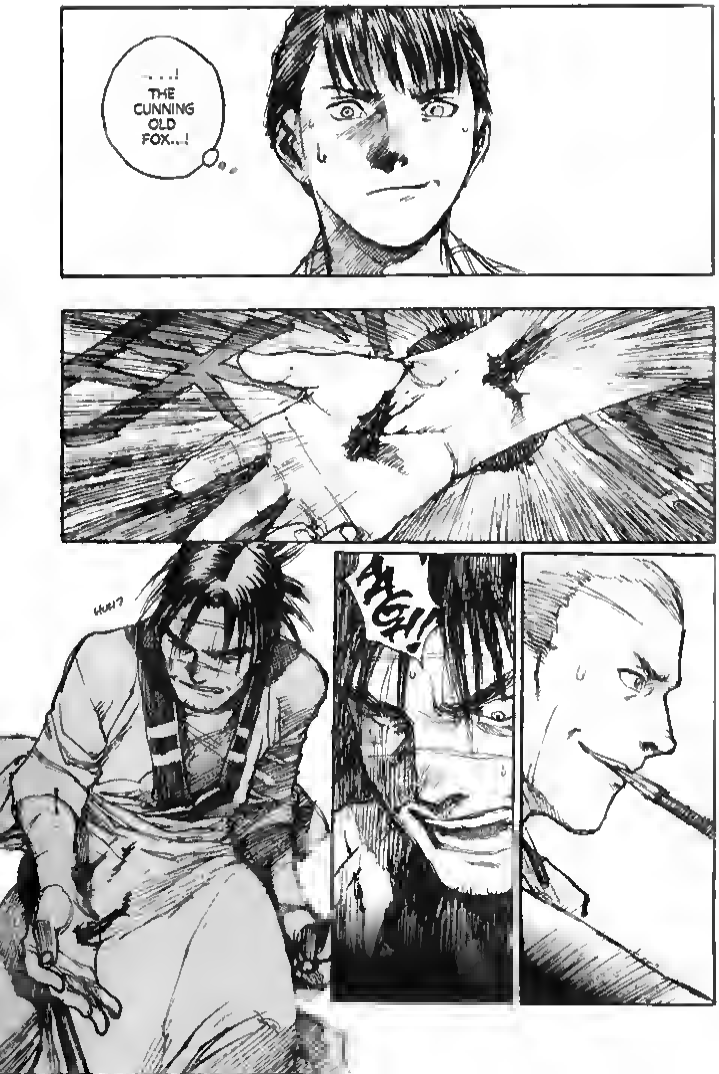
STILL...
...
.....!


A MAN'S HANDWRITING CAN CHANGE IN SO MUCH TIME.
...IT *COULD* BE MY IMAGINATION. AFTER ALL, IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE WE DIRECTLY CORRESPONDED.

HOWEVER, IN THE WORST CASE, WE HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR A TRAP!
RIGHT...?

SO, I TOOK CARE OF EITHER EVENTUALITY, MY BOY.
THAT'S WHY I SENT THREE OF 'EM.

HEH... AN EYE FOR AN EYE... A *LIE* FOR A *LIE*.
YOU SEE.?

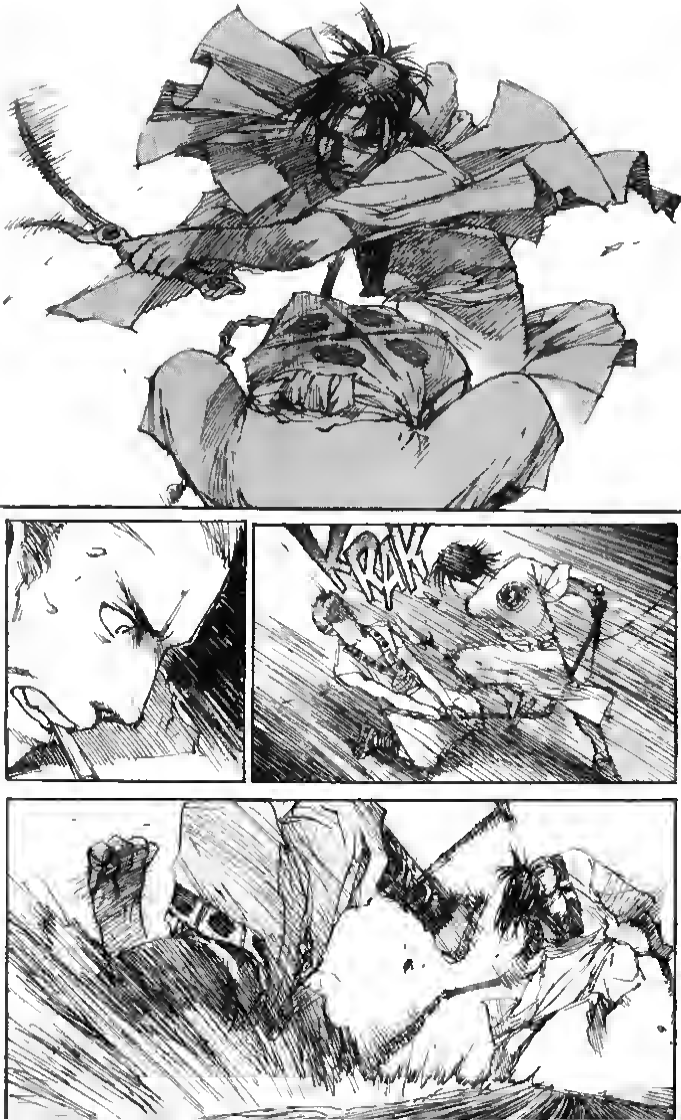

...!
THE CUNNING OLD FOX...!
HUH?
AHAH!

WHAT THE CRAP IS THIS?!
BWA HAW HAW!
LOOK! LIKE I HOOKED A BIG ONE!
HEY, HANADA. YOU JERKWAD! YOU READY FOR HIM OR WHAT?

DON'T BOSS ME AROUND, YOU LITTLE SHIT!
BUT, YEAH-- READY TO RIP!

THAP

TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THOSE SUCKERS, PAL!
DAMN RIGHT YOU CAN'T--
AND BY THE WAY,
GOD DAMN, THAT HURTS!
WHAT TH-?! CAN'T GET 'EM OUT!
IT'S GOT A CORE OF SOLID--
FORGET ABOUT TRYING TO CUT THROUGH THE HAFT!


KRAK

HOLY.. !
AAUGH!
YEAH... NEAT LITTLE GIZMO YOU GOT HERE.
BUT IF I TAKE YOU OUT FIRST, IT DON'T HARDLY MATTER... DOES IT?
WELL, LOOKS LIKE YOU ALL GOTTA DIE.
YOU WANTED TO PLAY FIRST, SO... TOUGH LUCK, PAL.

SEE YA IN HELL.
HRG?!

SLAAK
HEH!
SSSS

HNNG!
SON OF A BITCH!!
HANG 'EM HIGH! YEEHEE HEE!
THOK
KDD

WELL, WE GOT YOUR ASS, MAN.
YA RAT BASTARD!
HEY, URUMA.
I'M WAITIN'.
"THANKS FOR SAVING MY BUTT, OL' BUDDY!" RIGHT?
GIMME A FRIGGIN' BREAK, YOU MORON!
YOUR TIMING WAS, LIKE, TEN FRIGGIN' SECONDS OFF!
BITCH, BITCH, BITCH! OKAY, NEXT TIME I LET YA GET WHACKED. F'NR BY ME?
CUT IT OUT!!

.....
.....?
HEY...
YOU. THE BIG DUDE OVER THERE.
...YOUR NEW GUYS AIN'T GETTING THE MESSAGE OR SOMETHING. YEAH?
BUT LOOKS LIKE NOWADAYS...
YOU LOOK LIKE THE REAL SWORDSMAN HERE. SO I'LL ASK YOU.
I THOUGHT "ONE ON ONE" WAS THE ONLY RULE YOU ITTŌ-RYŪ GUYS STUCK TO.

YOU KNOW ,, I'VE JUST BEEN THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING ABAYAMA SAID ,,
...JUST BEFORE WE LEFT THE RESIDENCE.
"TAKE ALL THE WEAPONS YOU'VE GOT," HE TELLS US.
HUH! EASY ENOUGH FOR HIM TO SAY--HE DOESN'T HAVE TO LUG ALL THAT IRON FOR MILES OVER MOUNTAIN ROADS.
AND JUST LOOK WHAT WE SNAGGED.
THE MAN HIMSELF.
THE CLOTHES ARE A BIT DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I HEARD.
BUT THAT SCAR OVER THE EYE... NOPE. THERE ISN'T ANY DOUBT.
BUT I GUESS HE SNIFFED SOMETHING IN THE WIND. THAT CUNNING OLD GEEZER.

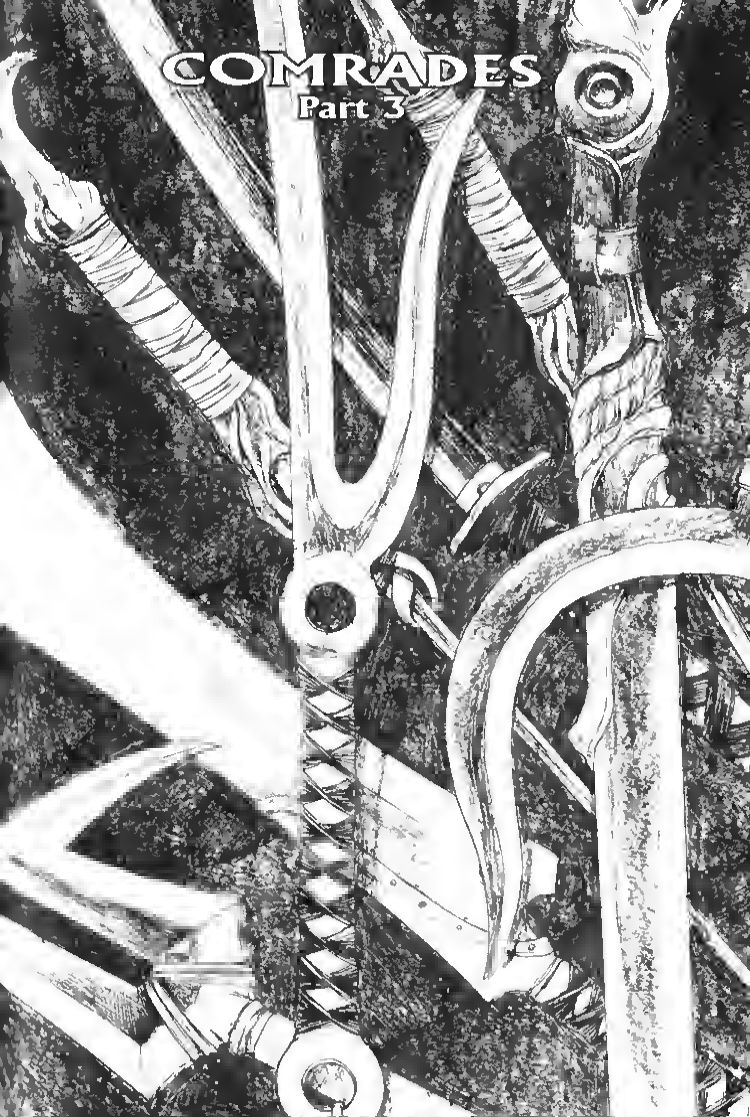
STRANGE... IT ALWAYS KIND OF NAGGED AT ME THAT SOME SCRUFFY *RŌNIN* COULD BE TAKING OUT SO MANY GUYS FROM THE FAMOUS *ITTŌ-RYŪ*, SINGLE-HANDED.
I ASKED AROUND A BIT, AND WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
I HEAR THIS RUMOR YOU'RE A BIT... ***DIFFERENT*** FROM THE REST OF US.
ONE OF THOSE GUYS YOU DEFEATED, ***SHIZUMA EIKŪ*** ?
PEOPLE SAY HE'D BEEN WANDERING THE BYWAYS FOR ***TWO HUNDRED YEARS.***
ARE THERE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO ***DON'T DIE*** ?
NO WAY TO PROVE IT NOW, THOUGH, OF COURSE. ANYWAY, HELL OF A THING TO THINK ABOUT.

I REALLY WANT TO KNOW. SO, UNTIL I HAVE SEEN FOR MYSELF...
...I AM PREPARED TO DEFY OUR LEADER'S WISHES.
THERE-FORE I'M AFRAID THAT IN THIS CASE,
. ALL BETS ARE OFF. MY APOLOGIES, SIR.
BWA HAW HAW!!

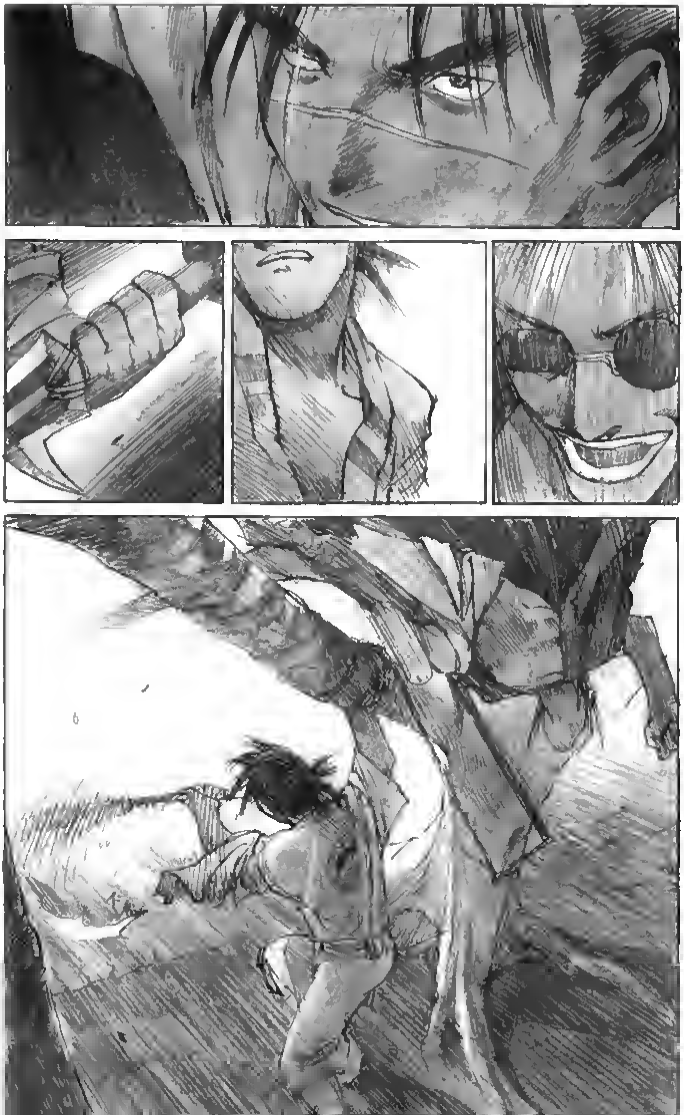
OUT-STAND-INS, HIGA, MY MAN!
WE CAN PLAY DIRTY WITHOUT ANY FLACK FROM YOU? EXCEL-LENT!
HEY, HANADA!
GIMME MY CHOP-PER.
TIME FOR A LITTLE SLICE 'N' DICE.
THAT'S "PLEASE MAY I HAVE MY CHOPPER, MISTER HANADA, SIR?"
DIDN'T YOUR MOM TEACH YOU HOW TO BE POLITE, SHIT-FOR-BRAINS?
HERE, CATCH.

HEH.
WHAT A COUPLE OF *POSEURS*. YOU CAN SKIP THAT CRAP WHEN YOU GOT YOUR ENEMY STRUNG UP LIKE A PIECE OF MEAT, Y'KNOW.
I DUNNO ABOUT YOU TWO, YOU CLOWNS.

LEMME TELL YA .. AT FIRST MY PLAN WAS SIMPLE, I SWEAR.
ALL I NEEDED WAS THE TSUKO TEGATA. SO, I FIGURE, ONCE I GET MY HANDS ON THAT...
...THE OTHER TWO CAN WALK.
BUT NOW... SHIT. YOU KNOW I'M IMMORTAL AND YOU STILL COME AFTER ME?
EITHER YOU GOT SERIOUS GUTS, OR NO BRAINS. MAYBE BOTH.
ANYWAY, IF ALL I GOTTA DO IS KILL YOU GUYS, THEN HELL...
...FIGURE I CAN DO IT JUST FINE, EVEN LIKE THIS. SO LET'S PARTY!

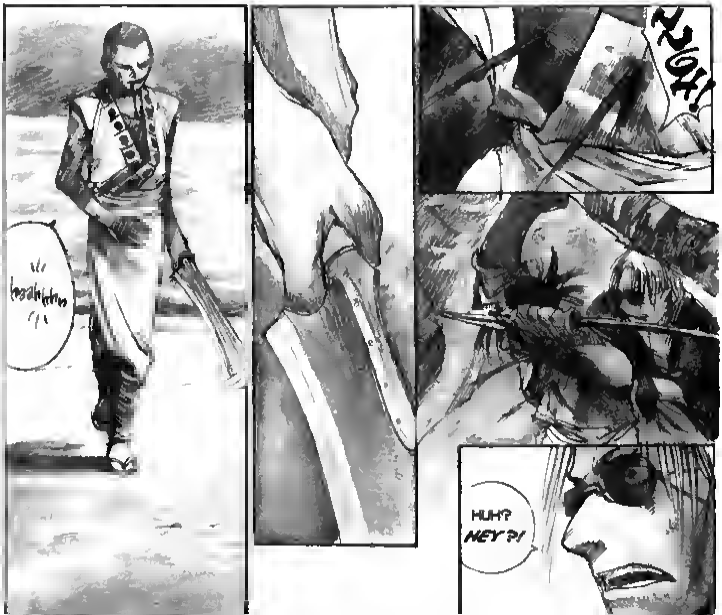

COMRADES
Part 3

HEHE
GYAHA
HAHA!



AAAHHH!
HOK!

HEE HEE HEE HEE!
AUGH!


HUH?
HEY?!

GOK
CHOK
CHOK
ANG!
DAMN
HEY HEY HEY!!
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS SHIT?!
YOU'VE BEEN STABBED THROUGH THE GUTS! FRIGGIN' ACT LIKE IT, WILLYA?!
QUIT SQUIRMING AROUND, YOU SON OF A BITCH!!
WITH THAT WIMPY THING ANYWAY
BESIDES, GIMME A BREAK! IT'S GONNA TAKE YOU AN HOUR TO CUT THROUGH THAT BRANCH!

OUTTA THE WAY, HANADA!
?!
HOLY SHIT!

KLANG
RAAH!

KSHANG
YEEH!
HNG!
HHURRRNNNGGHH!!

:hahhr:
:harrr:
:hmmf:
JUST ONE ARM LIKE... THAT...! :hmmf:
NO SHIT! MUST BE TOUGH, EH, DUDE?
SO DIE!
CHOMP
!!
OW!
H-HEY! WHAT THE F--?!
NO FAIR, MAN! HEY! YOU LISTENING TO ME?!

GODDAMN IT! OWWW! SHIT!
AIN'T YOU GOT NO PRIDE?! OKAY, OKAY! SHIT! I'LL BACK OFF AND WE CAN GO AGAIN, OKAY?
OH, MAN! NO!
C'MON, DUDE! GIMME A--
OWWW AUGHH!
SKRUNCH

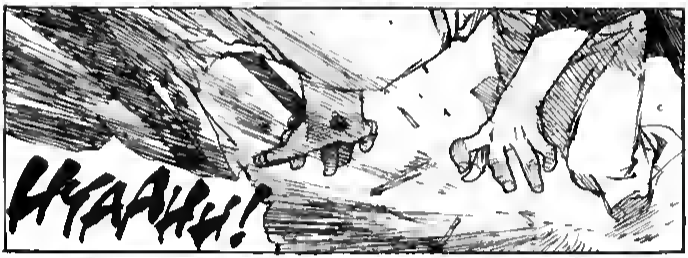
SNAK
OH CRAP!
NICE LITTLE CHOPPER YOU GOT HERE, PAL.
HOPE YA DON'T MIND IF I BORROW IT A SEC.

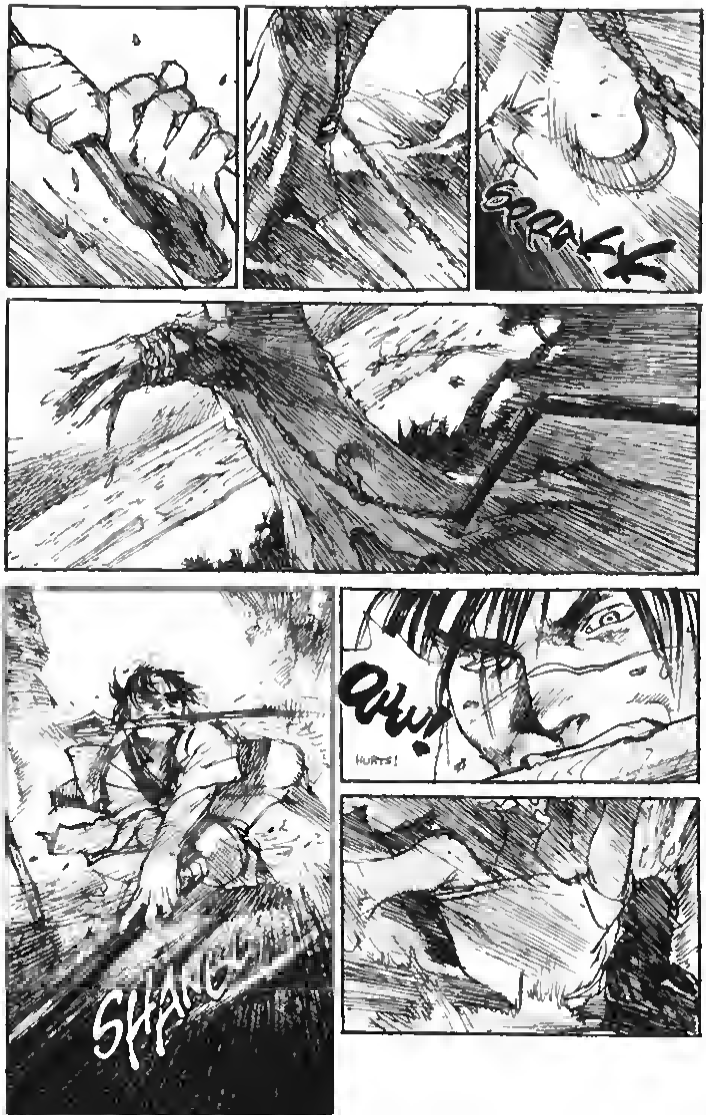
Y-YOU'RE A PSYCHO, DUDE! WHA--
?!?
HEY!!
FWSSH

CUT THAT OUT!!
WHOA?!
JESUS, MAN, JUST GIVE IT UP, WILLYA?!
C'MON! GIMME IT BACK! GIMME !!
OWW! SHIT!
OKAY... NOW HOLD ON TIGHT!
HUH?!

AUGH!
WHOA...?!

CHOD


HYAAH!


SPRAKK
OW!
HURTS!
SHANG

.....
.....
.....
DAMN... GOTTA GET THESE OUT.
WHILE I STILL GOT SOME T--
;;wheeww;;

AUGH!!
.....
.....
.....!
-sniff...
GAVE ME A BLOODY NOSE...
YOU FRIGGIN' ASS-WIPE!

YOU ARE SOME-THIN' ELSE, DUDE.
YOU ACT LIKE YOU DON'T EVEN GOT MY TWO STICKERS THROUGH YOUR GUTS!
THAT SHIT ABOUT YOU BEIN' IMMORTAL MAY BE A BUNCH OF CRAP, BUT MAN, WISH I WAS HALF AS TOUGH AS YOU, ANYWAY!
SLCCH
UHHG!
BUT IT BLOWS MY MIND THAT YA SEEM TO THINK YOU CAN TURN YOUR BACK ON YOUR OPPONENT...
...JUST 'CAUSE YOU KNOCKED HIM DOWN FOR A SEC!
WELL, DUDE... YOU CAN TAKE THAT LITTLE LESSON WITH YA TO HELL!

FWKK
GUY?
武士

YEE HEE HEE HAW!
HEY, WHAT'S WRONG, MR. IMMORTAL DUDE?! C'MON-- GET UP!
COUPLE LITTLE POKES LIKE THAT AIN'T NOTHING!

.....
.....
SO MUCH FOR THAT
WAIT A SEC... THIS MEANS WE DON'T GOTTA..
..GO ALL THE WAY TO KAGA!
EXCELLENT! THIS FRIGGIN' HEAT'S BEEN KILLIN' ME.
DON'T KNOW HOW THOSE OTHER GUYS HACK IT

WHA--?!
WHAT THE FUCK?!
NO WAY, MAN!
NO WAYYY!!

BEEN... A LONG TIME... AGES...
...SINCE SOMEBODY.. PUNCHED A HOLE IN THE OLD BRAINPAN...
HEH.. EYE-SIGHT'S SORTA... CLOUDY, BUT...
DOESN'T *HURT* AS MUCH AS A STAB THROUGH THE GUTS. WEIRD, HUH?
.....
.....
.....!
HUH? WHAT'S UP?
THAT ALL YOU GOT, SMART-ASS?
SOME-THING LIKE THAT?
OR... YOU JUST SO BLOWN AWAY YOU CAN'T EVEN TALK?

YEAH?

WELL... uh... CRAP.

THINK I BETTER... RUN.

FWPP

HOLY SHIT!

GRRK!

RIAH!

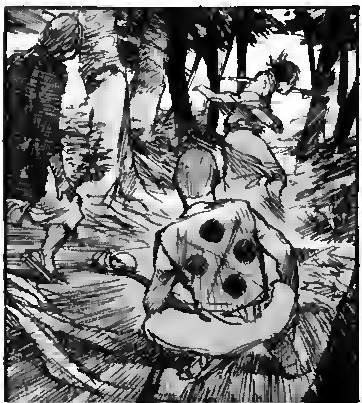
HRRG!
@@DOUNN THINGS!

HANADA! DON'T JUST STAND THERE, DIPSHIT!!

SON OF A BITCH MAY REALLY BE IMMORTAL, BUT--

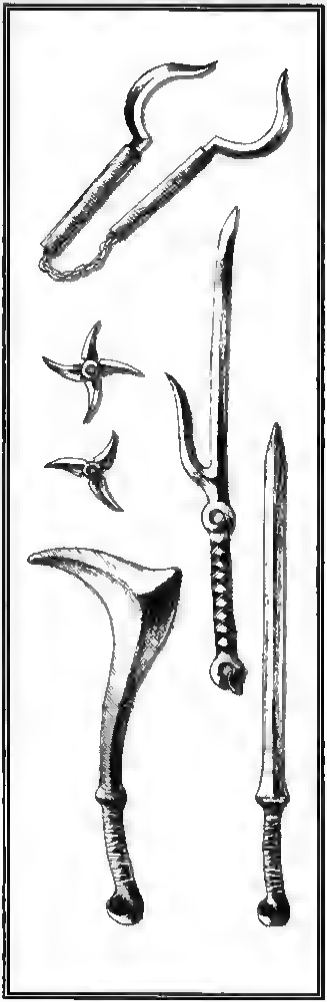
--IF WE HACK HIM TO BITS IT AIN'T GONNA MAKE A RAT'S ASS WORTH OF DIFFERENCE!
GRAB SOMETHIN' YOU CAN DO SOME SERIOUS CUTTING WITH! I'LL USE MY CHOPPER, AND--

!!
H-HEY!
?!



TO BE CONTINUED...!

GLOSSARY



banshi: samurai manning a *sekisho* (checkpoint)

banshu: officers serving under the Shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the Shogun himself

dōjō: a hall for martial arts training; here, centers for swordsmanship

han: a feudal domain

ittō-ryū: the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

kōkenjo: sword school established by the Shogunate

mon: a small coin

Mugai-ryū: alleged sword school of Hyakurin and the Akagi assassins; literally, "without form"

Mūko-jima: a district in Edo and also in present-day Tokyo

musubi: a hand-molded rice ball, often with a filling of fish or vegetables

Mutenichi-ryū: sword school inherited by Rin's father

ochazuke: a soupy mix of rice and green tea, flavored with various garnishes

ri: old Japanese unit of measurement equivalent to 2.44 miles

rōnin: a masterless samurai

ryō: a gold piece

sekisho: checkpoint. The central government strictly regulated travel, and all travelers had to submit papers at official checkpoints along the main highways into and out of Edo.

Shi-shuku: four areas of old Edo best known as unofficial red-light districts

tegata: travel pass

yukimachi: brothel favored by the Ittō-ryū

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

SPECIAL "PAD OUT THE END OF THE BOOK" SPECIAL!

SAMURA'S WEAPON SHOP OPEN 24 HOURS

烏 KARASU "The Crow"

These weapons were originally used by Sabato Kuroi The number of blades is different for the left and right hands but this does not appear to be significant.

万次 MANJI

MANJI'S BEEN RUN THROUGH BY THIS ONE

▲四道 SHIDO "The Four Paths" (one of a pair)

Manji has a tendency to name his weapons after their former owners and this is no exception This is a relatively short sword but even so no normal person would hide this in his clothes

MANJI'S BEEN SLICED UP BY THIS ONE

▲妹守辰政 IMO-NO-KAMI TATSUMASA 'Sister Defender Tatsumasa' (one of a pair)

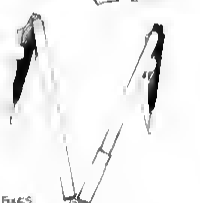
According to my notes to myself back at the time of my debut this is apparently the work of famed swordsmith Toratoru Kotetsu " But there doesn't seem to be anything particularly special about it It's an okay sword by itself but there's no reason to get two of them

▲阿吽 AUN

(無銘) (NO NAME)

These are different from the similar weapons in the first episode

Usually this is folded up as shown on the right ◆ It's only assembled for combat It can also be used as a two-part spear



The chain fits into one of the scabbards and can stretch out to about seven feet (Whether this is good for anything is another question entirely)

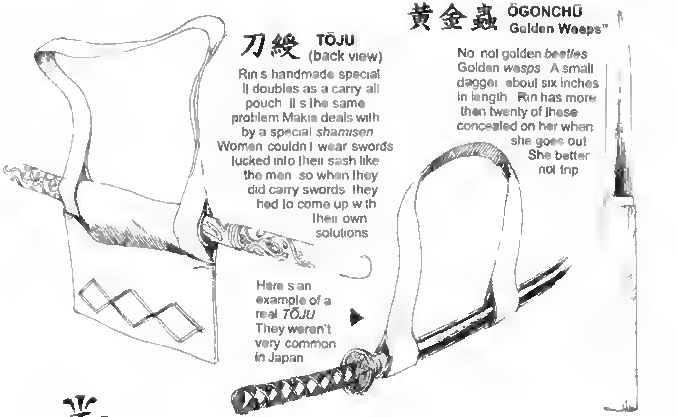
HERE THEY ARE FOLKS THE WEAPON NAMES AS REQUESTED IN YOUR MANY POSTCARDS BUT I'M BEGGING YOU DON'T MAKE ME TRY TO COME UP WITH A BUNCH OF CORNY NAMES FOR EVERYONE'S "SPECIAL SWORD TECHNIQUES" !

▼クトネシリカ KUTONESHIRIKA

"Kutoneshirika" is the name of a spirit sword that appears in an Ainu myth cycle. Since the sword came from Ezo (the northern island now known as Hokkaidō), Rin probably just named it on a whim. It's not very sharp.

黄金蟲 ŌGONCHŪ "Golden Wasps"

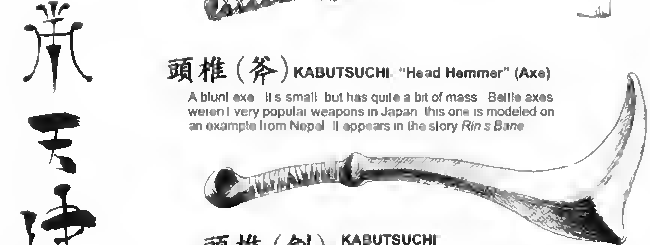
No, not golden *beetles*. Golden *wasps*. A small dagger about six inches in length. Rin has more than twenty of these concealed on her when she goes out. She better not trip.



刀緌 TŌJU (back view)

Rin's handmade special. It doubles as a carry-all pouch. It's the same problem Makie deals with by a special *shamisen*. Women couldn't wear swords tucked into their sash like the men, so when they did carry swords, they had to come up with their own solutions.

Here's an example of a real *TŌJU*. They weren't very common in Japan.



頭椎（斧）KABUTSUCHI "Head Hammer" (Axe)

A blunt axe. It's small, but has quite a bit of mass. Battle axes weren't very popular weapons in Japan; this one is modeled on an example from Nepal. It appears in the story *Rin's Bane*.

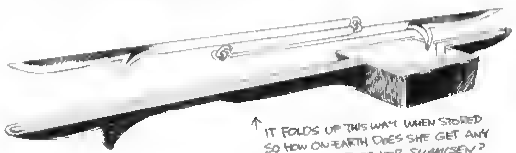
頭椎（剣）KABUTSUCHI "Head Hammer" (Sword)

A sword of the same name appears in the earliest of Japanese written records, the *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicle of Japan). I don't know if this is the same design, though (of course!). I might mention here that Anotsu's name, clothing, and even his weapons all still show the mark of the "ethnic-flavored" universe I'd been planning to set the story in until just before I began the series.

ANOTSU

春翁 HARU-NO-OKINA "Old Man of Spring"

A three part spear Judg ng from the blade it was probably re-fashioned from a fore gn weapon Strictly speaking the middle section should be somewhat shorter than the other two sections as shown in the art here But usually the artist just lets that go in the story itself Total length eight feet



↑ IT FOLDS UP THIS WAY WHEN STORED SO HOW ON EARTH DOES SHE GET ANY SOUNDS OUT OF HER SHAMISEN?

MAKIE

MAGATSU

グラントルコ "Grand Turk"

Actually if you were in Europe around the time of the Renaissance t wouldn t have been so strange to see a sword like this It s a weapon specialized for stabbing

Normally there would be a sword guard between the main blade and the grip Probably Magatsu threw it away himself I can just hear him too "Gets in my friggin way!"

SHIZUMA

▼井上真改蟲殺 INOUE SHINKAI KOSATSU "Wormkiller"

He s taken a masterpiece sword by the genius swordsmith Inoue Shinkai and ruined it with this ragged edge

What s more frightening than the cutting edge itself is the poison that s supposed to trickle down those slivers It s a horrible weapon truly made to kill with one blow "

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

The [illegible] Manji, and his charge, Rin, have lost their best chance to avenge the death of Rin's parents at the hands of Anotsu Kagehisa's renegade sword school, the deadly Itto-ryu. Manji and Rin's alliance with the mysterious Mugai-ryu assassins has failed, and now to pursue her parents' killer, Rin must pass through the Shogun's checkpoints without Manji, one of the most wanted men in Japan. When Manji discovers Rin has gone, he faces the impossible choice of storming the checkpoint or leaving Rin to face the Itto-ryu alone. And when Rin is falsely named as a murder suspect, the stakes are raised as she faces even greater odds to fulfill her blood oath!

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